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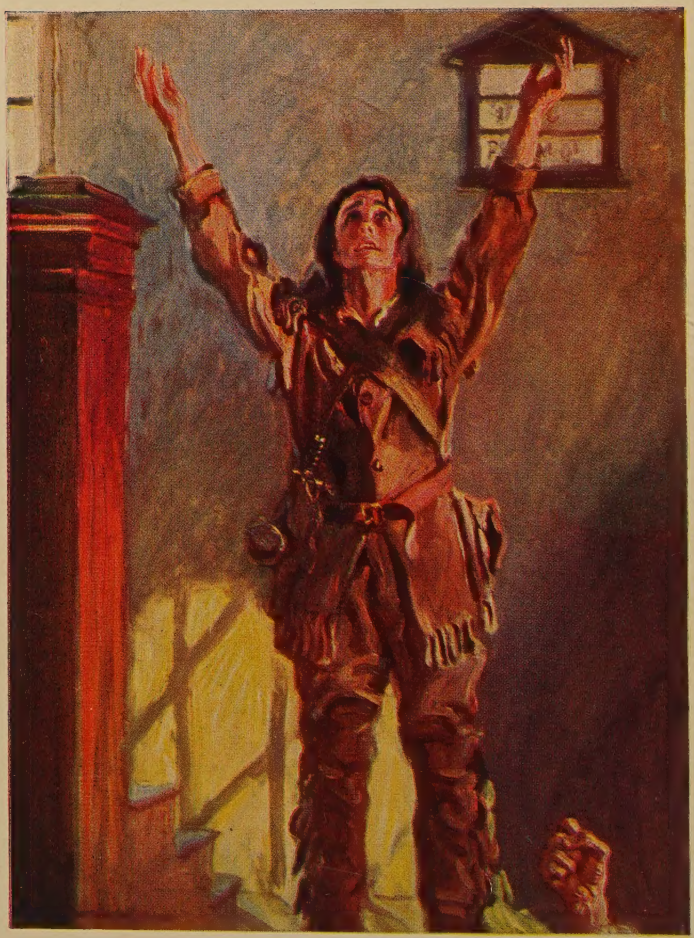

—Frontispiece
"BUT AS FOR ME—GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH!"

A
LIGHTER OF FLAMES

BY

WILLIAM S. HART

Author of "Told Under a White Oak Tree," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR BY

JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

Augsburg Seminary
Library

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TO

V. E. R.

Who gave me so much help
along a strange trail

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FOREWORD

In the writing of this romance I have satisfied a desire which I have long had, to present to the American public a living, vivid picture of that true American of whose life and history so little is known, but whose heart was big with love of country; who did not know the name of fear; and who dared to speak forth his convictions at a time when to do so meant the spark of revolt to the tinder of oppression, the stroke to the rousing-bell of Liberty,—namely, Patrick Henry.

As the story has unfolded, I have found it necessary to transpose some dates and incidents, but in the main the thread of the central figure's life runs true. I have called it in my own mind fictional history—an effort to make that vibrant past and its heroic actors live again.

Aside from works of history which have been

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consulted, I acknowledge a grateful debt to Wirt's "Life of Patrick Henry," written at Richmond, Va., in 1817, and published some time thereafter.

WILLIAM S. HART

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Done in color by James Montgomery Flagg

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A LIGHTER OF FLAMES

A Lighter of Flames

CHAPTER I

THE BUYING OF PATIENCE CONWELL

IT was springtime in Virginia, in the year 1774. High blue skies, flecked with fleecy clouds, cupped the New World like a flower in its chalice. Young life was rampant—young life of leaf and vine, of bird and beast and human. Young life of a country, too, of hope and ideals and ambition. The warm airs, scented with rich and nameless blooms, swept over fields pushing thick with new crops, while the tang of the sea came in with subtle sweetness.

In the streets of Jamestown on a golden, sunlit morning, equipages and persons on foot were wending their ways to a common goal, namely, the waterside of the River James,

where the good ship *Helen,* but lately come from overseas, lay warped at her moorings.

In the *Helen* had come passengers, some two hundred of them, of differing estates and purposes, and these were warmly welcomed in the small world of the Colonies. How eagerly were they invited to its spacious homes, set in their flourishing fields of tobacco! How keenly were they listened to as they descanted on that other world across the wide waters! Gossip of notables, of events nigh three months old, of fashions—all this found instant favor in mansion and hut and tap-room.

But the *Helen* carried other freight than becurled and powdered adventurers, seeking excitement and gain. Sad freight!—for in her hold came that most pitiful of all commodities, a consignment of human slaves. White people they were, called in more polite parlance, bond-servants, yet slaves to all intents and purposes.

Out of the English prisons they came, to

be sent to Virginia and sold to the planters, under indenture, for certain years of labor.

They were a motley lot which the Mother Country turned loose upon her offspring—some highwaymen, some worse; and others mere failures in a struggle, hard at best in a crowded land, to live.

These latter were from the Debtors' Prison, old men, hollow-eyed and hopeless, and several women.

But what would you? The blacks were few as yet, laborers were scarce in the Colonies, and the Indians then, as now, were not hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The tobacco fields were many and sadly in need of cultivation, for the gentry was more given to brocade than homespun, to leisure than work. Most of them were descendants of families of means who boasted their coronets and their seals.

It was a gaily attired throng which attended the sale that warm spring day. There were the Randolphs, the Churchills, the Lees,

and many representatives of other blue-blooded families of Virginia, together with their ladies. Interspersed with these honorable folk were the brutal traders, who bought to sell again.

For the most part these were a certain type, easily recognized. They were, necessarily, of a more or less cruel persuasion; for none other would have so bartered in human flesh. Some of them carried short-stocked, long-lashed whips, which they did not hesitate to use as constant reminder to their unfortunate property that they were masters, supreme and powerful.

In a green, low spot not far from the wharf's edge had been set up a huge block, a section cut from what had once been a noble tree, and clustered back of this were the servants to be sold. Some of these were hard-visaged men, with rebellion stamped upon them. Some were meek and ashamed, but most of them were sturdy and strong.

The Old World knew what the New

World wanted and picked its stock accordingly.

A wide circle of attendants ringed the green. Ladies in rich garments and powdered hair raised glasses in jeweled hands, the better to inspect the interesting merchandise, and bowed from the windows of their coaches to this gallant and that. A little way apart, as if she somehow seemed upon a separate and delectable plane, a young girl sat upon a horse. Maid and mount were alike noticeable in a land whose women were always beautiful and whose horseflesh was beginning to be a type of its own.

She was just turned twenty, that entrancing age when the charm of youth is adding to itself the cleverness of new experience.

Her face was oval, and of a delicate olive tint that threw out in arrogant beauty, like a shining jewel on a velvet base, the dusky glow of lip and cheek. The wide eyes beneath the sweeping red-brown lashes were true hazel, that mysterious and unsettling shade which is

neither brown nor blue but partakes of the beauty of both. The hair that shone under the little hat she wore was red-brown, like the lashes, and it was full of wayward rings.

No sooner had the young horse, mottled and slim, and brown as his mistress' locks, taken up his restless stand on the green's far edge, than an instant audience drew out of the crowd. Macaronies in embroidered coats, with snuff-boxes and slender canes, seemed to spring from the very turf, full-panoplied. For this was none other than Mistress Penelope Dunmore, daughter of Lord Dunmore, the Governor of Virginia.

Young Timothy Lovelace, son of a peppery and wholehearted Irish planter, whose keen tongue had won him a somewhat unenviable fame among his English neighbors, was the first to reach the girl's side.

"A good day, Mistress Penelope," he said, with a bow whose like was hard to match for grace in all the Colony. "The rogues behind the block are well complimented, I vow, to

have brought to the spectacle of their sale the fairest lady in Virginia."

There was a slight brogue in his musical voice, and his deep blue eyes said a daring lot more than his smiling lips.

"You are quick of speech, Mr. Lovelace," said the girl as quickly; "but does it not bespeak many golden hours idled away in cogitation on the neat turn of words, the best way in which to compliment a lady's looks?"

"A peg of ale on that, Tim," said Harry Corton, coming up with young Jack Frisbee to kiss Penelope's white hand; "she tripped you there for fair. 'Tis a lovely head that can hold beauty and wit together."

And he, too, told Mistress Penelope some eloquent things with a glance and a sigh. But the girl looked down upon them from her side-saddle with a pretty and quiet smile.

"You blades!" she scoffed, "do you do nothing, pray, but ogle the fair? Oh, for a real man, who is not afraid of honest labor and accomplishment!"

The discomfited trio laughed, perforce, and flecked their ruffles, preening against the observation of the many feminine eyes that were sure to turn their way during the morning. Suddenly Mr. Corton turned to her.

"Perchance, Mistress Pen, your wish is answered. Yonder stands what might fill the description." He nodded toward the far side of the green, where the less aristocratic of the spectators were gathered.

Just beyond this fringe, somewhat removed, stood a figure leaning against a horse—a tall, lean figure of a man, broad of shoulder, narrow of hip, straight as any Indian of the wilderness. His face was tanned by the free winds and the sunlight to a smooth darkness. He was clad from cap to moccasins in the buckskin of the woodsman. Except for his cast of feature and the nondescript ribbon tying back his pale hair in some sort of conformity to the fashion of the day, one might well have taken him for a half-breed.

Indolence was in every line of his panther-

like body, as he leaned against the horse. Levity and devilment showed in every twinkle of his care-free blue eyes.

The girl looked in his direction, while a ripple of amusement passed around among her gallants, this time at her expense.

"Fie upon you, Harry!" cried Lovelace. "You do but insult that intelligence which I just now ascribed to Mistress Penelope. Strike him from your favor for the next cotillion, Mistress, for he knows full well he does but jest."

"And why?" asked the girl. "Who is the man yonder?"

"You do not know? 'Odsblood! I thought all Virginia knew its most notorious ne'er-do-well—its riding, fishing, fiddling, smiling son of the forests, whose fame is passing wide in these parts. That is Patrick Henry, the lout."

"Sometimes we who are so swift at snap-judgment," she said, sagely, "come a header, are hoist by our own petard. Who knows?

Even the lout might prove himself a man, given the time and place and a great enough incentive."

The stentorian voice of the auctioneer was calling together the prospective buyers; the crowds were edging in, and in the general movement the girl on the brown horse, attended by the gallants on foot, went a trifle forward.

Her clear young eyes roved over the unhappy group behind the block, and a small line drew in between her arching brows.

Perhaps of all that chattering throng that gay spring morning, she alone felt something of their tragedy. At any rate, she had seemingly forgotten the young men beside her, and her pensive glance betokened that she was a-dream upon some forbidding subject.

She saw the first merchandise put upon the block, a huge Yorkshireman, heavy of feature, scowling-eyed, and saw him quickly sold for seven years of labor; for muscles bloomed

along his naked arms and strength was rampant in him.

A debtor went next, one of the older men, with a pale, fine face—a vastly higher type than the master who bought him—after desultory bidding.

Then mounting quickly in his place came a girl, a stoic, blonde creature, who stood up straightly and faced her fortunes with steady lips. She was easeful and lithe, standing with modesty and downcast look; and the bidding quickened promptly.

Two or three young planters, looking her over, began to call out offers under the crier's urge, and one of the traders, Gabe McCool by name, edged in and shot a brisk bid up.

This man was known the country round for one of the most brutal of his ilk; a huge bulk of a man, red of face, lowering of eye, who bought and sold—at profit, always at profit. Now his repulsive face glowed deeply and he flourished his whip, while he studied the lass

with open calculation. At his coarse voice cutting in, the girl upon the block cast a swift look at him and seemed to shrink. For the first time an expression of fear spread on her face, and she raised large blue eyes under fair lashes and looked slowly around at the ring of onlookers. Some were interested, some indifferent, intent only on the opportunity for gossip which the gathering offered; others were amused, and nearly all were smiling. What meant one comely servant-girl more or less to them!

But the slow blue eyes halted when they reached one face with eyes answering her appeal, whose hazel orbs were deep pools of sympathy. Of all that gathering Mistress Penelope Dunmore alone looked into the human heart on the selling-block and saw there terror of Gabe McCool, sudden, gripping fear that sapped the courage with which it had faced its fate before.

The young Miss on the brown horse moved uneasily in her saddle.

Once more the crier called for bids, and once more the planters answered. Once more the trader raised their bids. Another raise, and two of the planters dropped out. A third, a man from up the James, stuck with him for a time or two, and the price was now reaching high-water mark. At the next call this man shook his head. He was a kindly man, and the girl was good property, but the trader was forcing her up. McCool edged in as the auctioneer raised his gavel. As he neared the block, grinning, his stock-whip under his arm, the lass moved backward instinctively, and once again her blue eyes raised and shot a look across the heads of the crowd to the fair face under the brown hair. It was a pitiful look, a sweet look—a desperate look. It told that other young heart, swiftly, many things; such as a common innocence between them, a love of life, and that dear virtue which only a woman can comprehend—and—fear! It was an appeal, an offering of faith, as if, somehow, there were help in that other heart.

And there was promise of future fidelity in it, too.

Mistress Penelope saw all these things in that one deep glance. Upon the instant she rose in her stirrup, and her clear young voice cut sweetly out on the still air.

She raised the trader's bid.

At this unheard-of thing—a lady of Virginia bidding in open market!—all heads turned her way. Looks of surprise were bent upon her; the chatter ceased.

Gabe McCool flung round, his face black with anger, to gaze at her.

But she was the Governor's daughter, and all knew her to be the darling of that stern old martinet's heart, spoiled from her cradle by indulgence; if so sweet a nature could be said to be so. Now the hazel eyes were darker than their wont, and a spot of deeper red was beginning to burn in either cheek.

Nip and tuck went the bids, rapped out by McCool, called sweetly and clearly by Penelope. A hushed awe fell upon the gathering.

Away beyond all precedent had gone the price of one servant-girl from Lancashire, and for no apparent reason.

The trader was rich. He had caught that instinctive shrinking of his prospective property upon his approach, the look in the wide blue eyes. His square jaw was set like a lock.

So, at last, he named a figure which only a very rich man might equal. The Governor's daughter dropped her lifted hand and turned her head away. There was genuine distress in the fairest face in the Colonies.

The auctioneer raised his hammer—called —waited—called—called again—and then shot out the fatal word which sent McCool striding forward with a grin upon his evil face.

He stepped upon the block, reached up a hand, caught the girl's wrist and jerked her down forcibly, so that, naturally a creature of grace and slow movement, the blue-eyed lass stumbled and came down a-sprawl. At the laugh which followed, rippling around the

circle of spectators like a wave, a deep crimson dyed her face and the blue eyes blazed with a sudden spirit.

The trader swung her around and, for no reason save one of pure bravado at his triumph over the aristocracy, flecked his whip most dextrously, so that its lash curled around her feet.

At the same moment he raised the wrist he held, and with the swiftness of a cat the slave-girl bent and set her teeth deep in the flesh of his forearm.

It was a purely psychological action, a culmination of all the wrongs she had suffered, of the fear and the despair.

It drew a breath of amazement from the throng and many buzzing comments.

"La! La! The wench is murderous!" "Pity the trader for his bargain!" "A hussy from the London stews!" and so forth.

But one heart stopped a beat and then plunged on in angry sympathy—that of the

girl on the young brown horse. Her eyes were dark and fiery. She stood in her stirrup. One fair hand was clenched into a fist. A red spot deepened in her cheeks.

"The brute!" she muttered.

For Gabe McCool, his red face black with rage, was exercising his new prerogative. He raised the whip and brought it down savagely across the girl's shoulders. It was a significant fact that she stood erect under the indignity, though her lately flushed face went milk white and her eyes were blazing flames of hatred.

It was not a pretty sight, albeit no uncommon one.

What lifted it out of the ordinary was the fact that it involved somewhat the daughter of Governor Dunmore.

As for Mistress Penelope, she stood in her stirrup and watched. Her small hand was lifted, still clenched into an adorable fist.

"My heart!" she gritted between her pretty

teeth, "now is the time to prove a *man!* Will you, my masters, stand by and see the slave I coveted be bruised by that wretch?"

Her clear voice rose and carried.

"Mistress Penelope," began Tim Lovelace, placatively, " 'tis the trader's privilege. The wench is his. Set us a task of gentlemen and we'd give you our blood, any one of us."

"Bah!" cried Penelope, and brought the little fist so violently down upon the brown beauty's neck that he jumped in surprise.

Over across the green a figure raised itself lithely from its lazy position against a roan horse and with incredible swiftness threaded the crowd. In a fraction of a second it had crossed the space between the spectators and the block, and reached the trader and his victim. It was a lean figure in well-worn buckskins,—tall, graceful, powerful. With one leap it cleared the last distance and landed full upon McCool.

At the sudden impact the trader was jostled from his hold upon the girl, who was flung

IT WAS A STRUGGLE WELL WORTH WATCHING

roughly aside to gather herself up and stand panting, gazing wide-eyed upon the struggle which followed.

It was a struggle well worth watching. In fact, it soon became better than that; for the gallants and macaronies, crowding in, began to lay wagers to the delighted taking of snuff.

For though McCool was a square-built man and passing strong, the other was quick and hard in every muscle that rose along his arms and shoulders. He was The Forest incarnate —its slow growth and its health, its toughness and its pliability.

And he fought laughing. The deep blue eyes that were so smiling soft when he lay beneath a cloud-flecked sky, were now alive with dancing devils of enjoyment as he leaped for the trader like a panther for its prey. It was instant combat. Thud and stroke and shuffle, it flashed into fury with that first impact, and they fought to the finish from the start. Back and forth they went, this way and that, with the crowd surging after. Buckskin's blows

were lightning-swift. They took the trader here and there, snapped up his chin, set his nose to bleeding, filled him with red rage but left him no opening.

Then they came together. The square man had the advantage for a time. They strained and panted, and the bets changed face. Again they broke away. McCool was swaying with the mad lust of punishment. He lunged and countered wildly, crazy as an infuriated bull, and as dangerous. But the other played with him prettily, so that admiring comments passed in the crowd, and at last, as if the thing were becoming tiresome and he would fain end it, the slim man of the forest rushed forward like a catapult, caught his adversary in his arms, rushed him backward, stumbling, all but falling, past the block and to the water's edge. Then, with a mighty heave and effort—for McCool was a heavy man—he stooped, gripped, lifted, strained backward and literally threw him into the tide below. It was a splendid show of strength and mental calcula-

tion. A great cheer went up from the watchers in sheer admiration.

" 'Sdeath!" cried that same Mr. Corton who had jested a short while before at Buckskins, "but that was a passing show of prowess!"

"And," cut in Mistress Penelope, in a surcharged voice, "methinks, gentlemen, that our hero is that same ne'er-do-well whom you so kindly described to me—the riding, fishing, fiddling son-of-the-forest—Patrick Henry! It remained for the lout to turn gallant and dare when the gallants failed."

At the ice in her tone the young men looked chagrined, but had no answer. None was needed, for they were dragging the trader, nigh drowned and completely cowed, from the River James, and the girl was all eyes for the performance.

As he scrambled up, Patrick Henry turned to the Governor's daughter and smiled directly at her. She saw the laughing devils in his blue eyes.

"Mistress," he said clearly, "will you name

the price you wish to pay for the young wench yonder?"

Without a second's hesitation she named her last bid.

Henry turned to McCool.

"The lady will pay that price. Do you withdraw—or sell under your own bid, which is more according to law and custom?"

The trader frowned and would not answer; but Henry stepped toward him once more and he hastily agreed.

Presently the tall man in the buckskins led forward the lass from Lancashire and, lifting her hand, laid it in that of the girl on the brown horse. The two maidens looked into each other's eyes, and a sort of awe at their good fortune was visible in each young face.

"Your name, girl?" asked the lady.

"Patience, Mistress," the other answered; "Patience Conwell."

Then Mistress Penelope held out that same small hand to Patrick Henry, the ne'er-do-well.

"Sir," she said distinctly, so that all heard, "it has been my great good fortune to behold today a *man*—when I was wishing that one of that rare gentry might appear. We thank you, the lass and I, for that precious drubbing which you gave the trader."

"Knife me!" muttered Timothy Lovelace, "but that was a hard one!"

But Patrick Henry had taken the white hand, and, stooping from his great height, he kissed it as gallantly and gracefully as any of his betters might have done.

AT THE COCK'S FEATHER INN

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CHAPTER II

AT THE COCK'S FEATHER INN

THE golden sun was going down behind Virginia's hills on a day not so long after the sale of slaves in Jamestown. Its last light was gorgeous on forest and sward, gilding the roofs of the stout houses the Colonists had builded for themselves all up and down the lovely land. Where a cross-roads lay whitely among the green, sweet with the smell of trodden dust, a long low building sat sedately, its log walls and deep verandas offering simple welcome to the wayfarer.

The host himself, round-stomached and with a plain benignity of feature, stood in the cool shadows with his hands clasped under his coarse white apron. Many a day did the good man stand thus looking up the Jamestown pike, for most of his fortunes came that way.

Behind him, in the wide doorway, a young lass stood, smiling.

She was rather tall, deeply-moulded, and her shoulders were carried with a martial air that would have better befitted a brother, had she possessed one. Her head was beautiful, shaped on lines of strength and intelligence; her brow broad and fair, and the face beneath the soft dark hair was live and spirited. Over the sparkling dark eyes long lashes swept with constant movement, and tiny crinkles drew them prettily at the corners when she smiled, which was very often. She looked at the broad back of the tavern-keeper now with a quizzical expression.

"Father," she said presently, with a little ripple of laughter in her voice, "who are you expecting this night of such great importance?"

The tavern-keeper turned.

"You should know, my girl," he answered; "for who comes oftenest to the poor hospitality of John Fairweather? And why?"

The girl laughed openly, putting a shapely hand on the lintel and tipping back her head.

"Who? Why, the blades from Jamestown, of course. And for the golden ale whose fame is far in Virginia—nothing else."

"Fie! There is *one* who comes and comes again—"

"Oh—yes! Young Tim Lovelace, you mean?"

There was innocence and raillery in the soft voice.

"Not he," said John Fairweather, "though young Mister Timothy is true blood of the country, and I am flattered that he patronizes me. No, you minx!"

"Oh—then it is the Fairfaxes from beyond the river."

John Fairweather took his pudgy hands from beneath his apron and snapped a finger in vexation.

"Doxey, if you weren't your mother's daughter, and her dead these many years, I'd

box those pink ears of yours! You know full well that Lord Les—"

"Listen, father," she broke in, brightly—"horses' hoofs a-pounding down the turnpike this minute!"

With the words there came on the still air of the evening the rataplan of mounts and men roystering out of the forest.

They came swiftly and pulled up with dash and dust a-flying in the very dooryard of the Cock's Feather Tavern, some seven young men in the early prime of their years, scions of good families all, reckless blades, snuff-taking macaronies, gallant and handsome lads, bent on an evening at cards and ale.

They swung down with rattle of spur, their broidered coat-tails, to a man, sticking out over their small sidearms; for it was the custom of the time to carry a short sword.

Six of them were Harry Corton, Jack Frisbee and young Tim Lovelace, along with Brithan Randolph, his cousin Charles, and that young Tom Jefferson, about whose reck-

less associates in other walks there was beginning to be a deal of gossip.

The seventh was a handsome man, noticeable in any gathering, that same Lord Lester whose name had been on the fat host's tongue but a moment before. He was slim as a reed and as graceful.

Fair curls tossed on a head whose pride was very great, while deep blue, sparkling eyes beneath straight golden brows looked out on the world with challenge. With the instant of his dismounting their swift glance leapt to the girl in the doorway and he lost no time in bowing over the hand she gave him in greeting.

"Fourteen long miles, posthaste, Mistress Doxey," he said softly, "to drink from the fairest hand in the Colonies."

The girl curtsied, the curl hanging on her shoulder bobbing adorably.

"To drink the best ale, you mean, my lord," she answered quickly.

Then she turned inward to attend to the du-

ties set her by their arrival, and the newcomers trooped in after, passing through the large outer room to a more private one beyond. Here candles were already lighted in sconces on the rough walls, the benches drawn to the heavy tables, while out of the circling shadows the kegs and barrels waited on their trestles, their spigots faintly odorous. The floor was freshly sanded and the tavern-keeper bustled here and yon like a nervous hen, setting forth cards and mugs for the coming revel.

The young gentlemen settled themselves around the tables, their gay laughter filling the soft spring night with pleasure.

They were friends all, yet of late a thin grey shadow had seemed to hover over these merrymakings when the wine and ale were flowing free and tongues were loosened. Sometimes a deep gravity sat upon the fine, mobile face of young Mr. Jefferson when the usual cup was drunk in loyalty to King George, that short-sighted monarch across the

sea, and he had once risen and all but forgot to drink, in the deep thought that took him. Hands had been lowered that time, eyes narrowed and lips compressed, while his mates waited. Then he had smiled, tossed off the draught, and the tension was broken.

There was another, too, whose merry glance scanned each face when the speech swung toward the political life of the Colonies—Timothy Lovelace. But of him later. Gallant Tim Lovelace, whose blood was one day to be spilled on a glorious field, whose heart was ever high with the hazard of life!

"Mistress," said Charles Randolph, as Doxey Fairweather came in with a wooden platter on which were stacked to overflowing the little sugar-sanded cakes for which the girl was famous, "are we to be favored tonight by the white-throated bird that sings in the outer room?"

Doxey set her platter at his elbow and smiled down at him. In the smile of this slim daughter of the crossroads there was a lure of

sweetness, a subtle charm of honesty and keen understanding, which drew men's hearts toward her, as sparks fly upward. The little crinkle at her eye spoke of wit and the ability to see the hidden point of badinage. The beautiful curl of her red lips, sweet and soft with youth and health, was tenderness itself. In her deft service among her father's tables there was a foreshadowing of the faithful home-maker, the touch of universal motherhood. In the deep heart of this girl kindness was ever uppermost. So now she smiled at Charles Randolph, and it was almost as if she laid her strong, fine hand upon his shoulder, or caressed his powdered hair.

"Why, yes," she said, simply, "an my father's guest likes my poor tunes, it pleasures me to sing them."

So when she had snuffed all the candles to a brighter flame, and had placed more cakes on a shelf at the back, so that none might go hungry, she passed through the door to the room beyond, leaving it a bit ajar, and in the

dusk sat down at her beloved spinnet and laid her long fingers on the keys.

There are some who strive and study at the shrine of music, who never can lay hold on the muse's soul, and there are others—untutored ones, sometimes—upon whom she lays her touch with magic, making them her own.

Such an one was Doxey Fairweather. She knew not one note from another, not even the names of her spinnet's keys, but she caressed the instrument with love, and it gave back to her and all who listened in the dusk, love and pathos and tragedy, and all the great emotions of this little human life, a pouring free gift that throbbed and trembled, crooned and sighed. And when she held up her shapely head and opened her round white throat it was primal music which flooded the tavern and all the nearby forest. Sometimes a passing traveler stopped to listen, and the young men playing in the back room forgot their cards to look down the vistas of the future where unknown things awaited.

Ah, youth!—youth, with its dreams and its tendernesses so poignant as to be a pain!—its egotisms, its thrills, its enchantments!

As the girl in the outer room began her nameless tunes the macaronies commenced their play; though that one whose pride and manly beauty were outstanding in a class where those attributes were common, namely, young Lord Lester, from the plantation up-river, held his cards so long in his hand that he was sharply rallied.

"I wager, my lord," said Jack Frisbee, gaily, "that our Princess of the Spinnet hath woven a spell of roses and wild honeysuckle to ensnare the senses. Am I not right? Do you not think on love this very minute?"

Lord Lester smiled, dropped his blue eyes and nodded at the laugh that followed; and presently all were attending on their play.

John Fairweather bustled about them as befitted a good host, seeing that the constantly emptied mugs were as constantly filled, as Doxey sang on from her shadows.

Time in spring is negligible, yet priceless. It drifts away swift as swallows a-winging, yet every moment is precious and beloved. So it was on this dream-laden night, when the low stars sat in the palely dark sky, like queens on their thrones, to behold the pageant of the earth go by, and a girl sang. The trees in the encroaching forest sent out a vital, sweet smell of growing and enduring, drawn out more pungently by the light dew. A tiny sickle of new moon was low in the west, like a silver-gold boat helplessly adrift on a dusky sea.

Presently a small sound was borne amid the shrilling of the katydids,—the soft shuffle of a horse that came from the direction of the deeper forest, traveling at its own slow gait. Its hoofs, in the soft dusk, made scarce a jarring note in the chorus of the night, and the man in the saddle leaned a trifle forward, as if to catch, in its delicate entirety, the full volume of the music which poured from the low doorway of the Cock's Feather. When the pair had reached the beaten earth before the tavern

the rider touched the horse's mane with light fingers and the animal stopped. For a long time the man sat silent, leaning sidewise in his saddle, then stepped soundlessly to the open door, where he leaned against the lintel with his arms folded on his breast. Doxey sang on. Sometimes it was a stirring love-song of English soldiery. Again it was a wordless humming, and once a tender lullaby. At last her fingers fell quiet on the keys, after running up and down the board, and she said, very softly:

"Good even, sir—by the door."

The man started, and laughed delightedly, in a voice as soft as hers. He had thought himself unobserved and meant to mount and go on his idle way without disclosing himself. But the sharp eyes of the girl had seen him the first moment he appeared warily beside the opening.

"Mistress," he said half whispering, "what can a thief say, taken red-handed? It was to steal the strings of bodiless gems you but now

poured out, doubtless for another, that I did stop in from the turnpike. I crave your pardon."

"Nay," said Doxey Fairweather, rising and coming to stand before him in the shadows, "what is music for, but to delight others? You are welcome, an it pleasured you."

The man was silent a little while.

"I know not," he said at last, "of another lass who, seemingly spied on from the dark, her house thus intruded upon, would have said so kindly a thing as that."

"So? Are not all maidens naturally kind, sir?"

"Marry, no! And they lack understanding, for the main—a priceless thing and scarce to be looked for in a woman."

"Is that so?" said Mistress Doxey, instantly bridling with that spirit which ever belied her gentle mouth. "And who are you, sir, to be thus damaging my sex?"

"I?" The man in the doorway laughed a little, as if amused. "Why—I am—a ne'er-

do-well, Mistress; a lover of the forests, kinsman to the birds and the free things. I am—"

He did not finish his words, for on the instant the inner door, being already ajar, swung open to the master's hand, and a flood of candlelight poured out directly upon him. It showed a tall figure clad in worn buckskins; a lean face, smiling, its blue eyes a-sparkle with the small adventure of the night, the song, and the girl he had found.

"Patrick Henry!" said Harry Corton, who sat facing the open door—"the gallant lout!"

The stranger laughed and nodded.

"As good a name as any."

Several of the young gentlemen frowned and fiddled with their cards. It was a time of peppery tempers, when pride was rampant and blood ranked high. They liked not this easy-going chap who championed slave-girls from overseas and—kissed the hand of the Governor's daughter.

"Come," said Jack Frisbee, "my friends, the

game waits. 'Tis tragedy to waste good play and the drinking of Master Fairweather's ale in staring at a wild buck of the woods."

At that needlessly unkind speech Doxey turned upon the speaker, eyes suddenly alight with anger.

"I am not so high-and-mighty, sir," she said clearly, "being only the tavern-keeper's daughter, therefore privileged to be kind. If you will favor me, stranger, with sitting a moment here in my quiet shadows I will right gladly sing for you 'The Rose and Thorn.' Are you so minded?"

Patrick Henry—for it was indeed he—looked with delight at the blank faces of the young men in the lighted room beyond.

He laid his rein up his horse's neck, spoke a low word to the animal, and sank down upon the sill, his fur cap removed and held in the hands that fell quiet in his lap. His long form leaned gracefully against the lintel and his blue eyes went out toward the forest that he loved.

"The gods see fit to bless me, Mistress," he said slowly. "I can think of nothing I had rather do than sit in your doorway and hear 'The Rose and Thorn.' "

And while the play in the other room took on a certain impatience, due to the restlessness of Lord Lester and Mister Frisbee, whom the rebuke had cut right sharply, the maiden sat her down to her spinnet keys again and sang like a nightingale, while the stranger in the dusky doorway listened as one in a dream.

It seemed to him, who loved the open with such enduring love, that all the voices of the moonlit night were speaking to him softly, that the very soul and spirit of the trackless woods breathed in the tuneful twilight.

When Doxey sang the ballad through—and it comprised some seven lengthy verses—her voice falling gently at the end like dew on thistle-down, the man on the sill sighed for very joy and looked toward her in the dark.

"You have opened a door and peeped into

the secret chamber of my heart, Mistress," he whispered, "and light has flowed in around you, while muted music trembles in the depths thereof. This night you have made a friend. If I can ever serve you—call—and I shall come."

There was the sound of a tumbled chair in the room beyond, the scrape of hasty feet as their owner rose.

"From the forest and stream, my girl," said Lord Lester sharply, who had been listening, his nerves a-strain, "dirty and lazy—a familiar of slaves and bondmen, a coarse, illiterate commoner! So will he come!"

"My heart!" cried Doxey Fairweather, springing to her feet. "Have all you young gentlemen a pick upon this stranger? I vow he hath a prettier tongue than all of you put together and e'en a cleaner wit!"

The tavern-keeper had brought a light and the players crowded into the outer room. Patrick Henry had risen to his tall height in the doorway. The smile was gone from his

bright blue eyes. A lambent flame burned there instead.

"My lord," he said gravely, "an you will fight I'll pin that lie upon your lips. I am fresh from the cold waters of the river not an hour back. I have walked and ridden forty miles today; and, as for being coarse, that's as God wills. Perhaps. But I trow I know more of the simple lore of the earth than you, and some little of books as well. Will you fight, my lord?"

His hand was at his hip, his straight glance boring that of the aristocrat. But Lord Lester spat contemptuously upon the sanded floor and turned from him, as behooved one of his rank challenged by a commoner.

"Sirrah," cried Brithan Randolph, "do you know no better than to talk of duelling with your betters? Go back to your mire and mind your manners."

Here young Mr. Jefferson stepped forward and laid a hand on the worn buckskin on the stranger's shoulder.

"Patrick," he said gently, "don't mind us. We're all of one pattern after all, some a little warped in the making. When do you and I take the trip up-river which we have been a-planning?"

At the gentle tone, the words of grace and dignity, the hand upon his shoulder, Patrick Henry's flaming blue eyes softened, the slow smile came at his lips' corners.

"Whenever you are ready," he said,

Utter consternation was instantly mirrored upon the faces round about, mouths fell open in amazement.

The stranger turned to the girl and held out a hand.

"I bid you good night, Mistress," he said, "and—I'll hear again 'The Rose and Thorn' many a night beneath the stars."

Then he turned from the room. There was a swift rattle of rein and bit, the sound of hoofs a-pounding down the turnpike.

Cold glances turned on Thomas Jefferson.

"I suppose you know, Tom," said Tim

Lovelace gravely, "that this fiddling fisherman hath a bad odor in some nostrils that are loyal to the King—that he is already termed Whig by gossip? Though he is of small account, still, in these days when uneasy rumors are becoming more and more like bats of ill-omen, each man must bear sharp light on his intentions."

Mr. Jefferson, a tall and earnest man, grave for his years, gazed into his friend's face.

"I know, Timothy," he said, still in that gentle voice; "and I still count him a *man.* A man's intentions are, and must ever be, between him and his God. I cannot pry into them."

"Odsblood!" said Tim Lovelace wonderingly. "Tom, I like not this tone! Know you how it must sound to all loyal subjects of His Majesty?"

Mr. Jefferson's face was very pale.

"I know," he said.

But the girl, standing a bit back from the

earnest group, put a quick hand to her pretty throat, and a painful flush dyed her brow.

"Whig!" she gasped sharply. "Did you call him 'Whig,' sir?"

Timothy Lovelace was already gathering up his gloves and snuff-box and did not hear her. The gay evening was done; the play had lost its edge. In a strained silence the gentlemen made ready to ride away, and more than one heart in the group was heavy; for they were all friends.

Presently John Fairweather stood in the darkened yard again and listened to their horses' hoof-beats growing faint in the distance, while the girl drew the cover over her spinnet's keys; and all the sparkle was gone from her eyes.

SHADOWS OF CLOUDS

CHAPTER III

SHADOWS OF CLOUDS

AT the house of Governor Dunmore there was a stir and bustle. Lights shone from all the windows in the walls, built of sturdy logs, and made for the grim business of defense if need be; and there was the sound of instruments a-tuning, for the youth and beauty of Jamestown danced, not to mention those of more mature years.

Mistress Penelope celebrated her birthday, at the ripe age of twenty-one. Guests were come from everywhere, in coaches from the outlying plantations, in bateaux and barges from up-river, and in some instances in chairs that had once swayed through the streets of London Town.

Dowagers in stomachers and gems, in stiff

brocades, with patches on wrinkled cheeks, simpered at elderly beaux in powdered queues, while those blessed of the gods with youth sparkled in their own right of pearly teeth and clear eyes, a wealthy galaxy.

Of these indeed was Mistress Penelope, her brown hair unpowdered, her hazel eyes a-shine like harbor lights, her bosom white as the waxen buds of the native magnolia. She passed among the throng laughing, kindly, beautiful, and the gallants sighed dolorously in her wake. It was the fashion to take seriously the pains of love, and more than one gay blade fancied himself the hopeless slave of this sweet and gracious girl.

Of this happily unhappy train were Tim Lovelace and Brithan Randolph. Charles wrote sonnets to Penelope's bosom friend, the pretty, petite and imperious Euphenie La Porte—as French as her name—the most heartless flirt in Jamestown, and, it was rumored, in all Virginia itself.

Harry Corton was bound hard and fast, in

real bonds of honest affection, to lovely Sheila Lovelace, Timothy's only sister.

Both of these maids were there, in silk and lace, in patch and powder, their black and golden curls hanging on their fair shoulders; and the Governor himself must pinch each pretty cheek and tell them some sweet compliment.

They trod the stately measures of the dance, and Cupid flew among them all, busy as a bee in clover.

Behind a bower of wild jasmine, hung to the rafters and draping its sweet length like a curtain to hide chairs and a rustic seat, Penelope and Euphenie, about midway the festivity, cooled their flushed young cheeks a delicious moment a-fanning.

"La! Penelope," whispered Euphenie, "would I could snare the beaux like you! There is Tim a-mooning like a sick calf, and Brithan bites his nails and scowls when you dance with the young stranger from overseas. Has he spoken yet of love?"

"Who? Brithan?" asked Penelope, her laughter breaking in her whisper. "He does little else!"

"No! No!" impatiently, "I mean the stranger—the big blond Hessian from His Majesty's court in London."

"Goodness, no!" said Penelope. "Euphenie, do you measure all acquaintances in terms of love? It is a slow process, and one built on faith and admiration and—and trust."

For a moment the speaker's hazel eyes were dreamy.

"Marry!" swore the little French maid hastily. "I meant not to stir up a sermon, dearest. Let us go back. My feet are itching for a measure with the stranger, I avow."

As the two girls parted the hanging lace of jasmine they came face to face with two young gentlemen of vital presence. One of these was the grave and serious Mr. Jefferson, and he was in earnest converse with his companion, which broke off abruptly as he made his bow to beauty.

He kissed both fair hands impartially, though Penelope's came first by reason of her rank and birthday celebration, and made a pretty speech to each.

Both pairs of sweet eyes went admiringly to the big-boned and clean-cut face of the other man, however, with unflattering swiftness, and each graceful courtesy dropped a trifle deeper.

"Mr. Washington," said Penelope, smiling, "I had despaired of your presence, since it was current in the town that you were off on some mysterious business among the plantations, and I feared you did not receive my bid."

"It was delivered as late as yestereve, Mistress, and I was many long miles away, but what could keep a man—and a young one—from your birthday rout? Neither miles nor mud nor sleepless hours in the saddle. I came, as you see. Am I to have an early dance as reward?"

"Two of them, sir, an I can find another vacant," said Penelope. "And you shall tell me

of the pulse of the plantations, and what are these ugly whispers of disloyalty."

The strong face of Mr. Washington turned grave at that and he passed a hand over his broad brow and back along his simply dressed hair.

"Nay," he said gently, "let us talk only of sweet things this night, dear lady. It is too bright and gay an hour to burden with idle speech."

And offering his arm with a splendid grace, of which he was past master, he led Penelope out among the throng.

It was not long until Euphenie had her wish, for the big blond man from overseas threaded the maze, like the needle to the pole, in the wake of Lord Lester, and bowed before her, as all must do sooner or later.

Lord Lester, who looked with calm eyes on all feminine beauty since he had taken to frequenting a certain inn on the Jamestown pike, gave him to her by name as Herr Heine von

Kneibling, and the girl looked up with her black eyes, innocent under their long lashes as a new-born babe's. So did she look at each new blade—with the same fatal result in almost every instance.

She gave him her hand, an infinitesimal, fluttering thing that lay like a rose-leaf in his huge one, and went bowing and swaying away, the lightest creature on her pretty feet that graced the floor that night.

Later she lightly and artfully directed him to where Penelope again spoke with Mr. Washington, and presented him to the latter, though she made it sweetly plain that she presented *Mr. Washington to him*—of so subtle an art of conquest was this small Euphenie!

At his name upon her lips the man of the Colonies drew himself a trifle more erect, it seemed, and the bow he made the stranger was a baffling thing, so punctilious was it, so stiff with ceremony, yet so surely was it tinged with vague displeasure.

The two girls exchanged a glance and the newcomers drifted away, leaving Penelope and her companion in momentary silence.

"Mr. Washington," said Penelope timidly, "what was it? I saw but now a—a shadow on your face."

The man smiled and looked away from her a moment, but there was a stern line about his mobile lips.

"If it was there, Mistress," he said gently, "I beg a thousand pardons—and we will chase it away with another measure. Come."

"George," said Mr. Jefferson an hour later, "what think you of this emissary from the Hessian king—our masquerading George the Third? I like not his looks. He is so bland, so cock-sure, so altogether on the top-rail, as it were, of royal favor."

"I think, Tom," said Mr. Washington, "that the dark cloud gathers and that we gather beneath it to rip out its silver lining."

With which guarded speech the two friends

clasped hands and turned to drink a final glass at Mistress Penelope's birthday rout, to bow before the Governor, a staunch and loyal Tory, and to go out together under the keen spring stars.

But they had voiced for the first time a blind and vital urge that was beginning to stir sluggishly in many a Colonial vein.

Long that night—or rather that spring morning, when the still darkness of forest and glade dripped with the dew—did the three girls, Penelope, Euphenie and Sheila, sit huddled together in Penelope's deep four-poster bed and whisper of conquest and lover's sigh and subtle speech.

"And oh, my heart!" said Euphenie rapturously, "but his arms are strong, this Herr von Kneibling! He did lift me clear of the floor on two occasions in the round dance, and it was as if a wind blew me! No effort—none in the least."

"But, Euphenie," said Sheila, with a sparkle

in her blue eyes and the shadow of a brogue on her sweet lips, "did you think it maidenly to dance with him again after such a liberty?"

Euphenie clapped her hands and laughed.

"Voila! mon enfant," she said, " 'twas then that I longed for his arms unspeakably!"

But Penelope, covering her rosy mouth with her hand, yawned frankly and smiled at her friends' chatter.

"You do nothing, my dears," she said sleepily, "but plan the conquest of the macaronies. And I fancy, Phenie, that in this new gallant you'll have more than you bargain for. He is a Hessian to his boot-heels, and I like not the type. But it was a pretty party—and heigh-ho!—I am growing old prodigious fast!"

She reached and drew the bell rope, and upon the instant there appeared with comb and brush, and towel on arm, the blue-eyed lass from Lancashire, to attend her mistress' brown hair, to apply beauty lotions, to stroke the white hands, and to do all with the passion-

ate adoration which her eyes had promised that day when Mistress Penelope had tried so hard to bid her from the auction block.

All through the rout she had sat in the tiring-room adjoining waiting for this moment of service—tireless, sleepless, eager.

Soon all were made ready for slumber, the little feet free of the satin slippers, the gay gowns hung on the walls, and when the three slim forms were snuggled safe in Penelope's big bed, she snuffed the candles, drew the curtains where the dawn was peeping, and softly withdrew to see that none disturbed the sleepers for at least nine long hours.

As her gentle hand drew shut the ponderous door Penelope's drowsy voice called:

"Patience Conwell!"

"Yes, Mistress."

"I love you—for—your—kindness."

And Mistress Penelope was sound asleep, but her serving-maid closed the door ever so softly, and there was a smile upon her lips.

HE OF THE SILVER TONGUE

CHAPTER IV

HE OF THE SILVER TONGUE

PATRICK HENRY came back to the Cock's Feather Inn. He came in broad daylight, cantering easily on his friend the good roan horse, with a flower in the turned-up flap of his shabby cap and a bundle underneath his arm. He dismounted in the beaten yard and, leaning in at the door, smiled at those he saw there. For on this occasion none had come out to meet the prospective guest. John Fairweather smoked his long-stemmed pipe, regarding him with unfriendly eyes.

Doxey, dusting the well-worn counter where her father took his toll for ale and food and lodging, glanced at him sidewise under the bands of her dark hair.

"Give you good morning, host," said Henry; " 'tis a marvelous day."

"A good morning—a good morning," returned Fairweather. But there was that in the tones of his voice which said it was not so good a morning as he could have wished.

The man in the doorway pricked up his ears, as it were.

His bright blue eyes, rather small, but deep and sparkling, sharp as gimlets, turned to the lovely face of the girl.

"And you, Mistress;" he said, "find you the day to your liking?"

Now Doxey was sweet and kind, but she was a "King's man" to her boot-heels, and there had stirred in her a faint resentment at her own championing of this stranger, ever since the night when the young gentlemen played in the tap-room. Therefore she pushed back a strand of hair that fluffed at her pink ear and flecked her cloth of best flax-linen with a nonchalant air.

"It was," she said, "a moment hence."

Patrick Henry drew his tall form up along the lintel and looked at her; and all the riot-

ous devils of levity had come back into his glance.

"So? And one stranger, passing, and remembering 'The Rose and Thorn' and her who sang it, has, by stopping for a civil greeting, changed its face?"

Doxey did not answer, but continued with her dusting.

The tavern-keeper, being a man who followed the line of least resistance, bustled out to attend to some vague duty in the nether regions of his hostelry, leaving the girl to handle this somewhat unwelcome guest.

Her keen tongue and her wit were known afar.

"And you will not even speak to me, today!" went on the man, with a wistful note in the cadence of his voice.

Somehow that little note seemed to stand out of the tones of that voice like a spot of color on a grey background. It pinged on a string in Doxey's heart and made her see again this same room in shadow, the faint whiteness

of her spinnet's keys, the circle of light beyond the inner door where the young men played.

Her lips drooped unconsciously, so subtly moving was that pleading note.

"An you will pardon me," she said, "I will acknowledge my lack of courtesy—but I have reason."

"Yes?" said Henry. "And if I might make so bold, since this reason seems to affect me most vitally, will you tell me it, Mistress?"

But the girl shook her head. Her face was very grave.

"I had rather not," she said.

The man stood for a long time without motion, studying her.

"I thought," he said at last, slowly, "that I had found one woman who was not like all the rest, who was kind to her heart's core, who had that most priceless thing so rare in her sex, namely, understanding. I believed I had found—a marvel."

A deep, painful flush rose under the maid's

fair skin, dyeing her from where her snowy kerchief crossed on her bosom to the soft hollows of her temples. Her dark eyes dropped in real shame and her fingers fiddled with the dustcloth. The mobile lips, however, set themselves in a line of stubborn pride.

She looked up again presently and the shame was burned away in the spirit roused in her by his words.

"And now, sir?" she said.

Patrick Henry bowed by the lintel.

"I still believe," he replied.

He laid his bundle, a neat package wrapped in the cool broad leaves of the mulberry and tied with withes of some long pale grass, upon a bench by the door, turned to his horse nosing at his elbow, mounted and rode away without a backward look.

For a long still moment Doxey watched him, noting the grace of his lean figure, the straightness of back, the upright carriage, the ease with which he swung to every motion of the horse.

When he was hid in the depth of the forest that edged so close to the turnpike, she sighed and picked up the bundle he had left.

Out of its cool heart she took three as beautiful specimens of the finny tribe as one might look upon in a long day's journey, their rainbow colors shining through their silver armor, cold and fresh as when they came flashing from their native element—fitting tribute from one who styled himself a "lover of the forests, a ne'er-do-well, a kinsman of the free things."

"Fish!" cried Doxey Fairweather. "Fish to the fair, instead of nosegays! A lout in truth!"

And she gave them to the serving man who came that moment from the inn's corner.

"And yet—" she thought perplexedly, remembering that wistful note in the man's voice, like a spot of color on a dull web.

A RISING SUN

CHAPTER V

A RISING SUN

PATRICK HENRY had long thoughts to occupy his mind these days. For that matter so had every heart in the Colonies,—and there were divers ways of thinking,—but the young man who so idly rode the by-ways was scrutinising from all angles and with delighted eyes the weighty matter of love.

This was absorbing business.

It did away, for a time, with his addiction to the dog-eared books on law which he carried in his sagging pockets.

When a serious intention assailed him, as it did often with a twinge of conscience, he would settle himself in some green glade where the birds twittered and he could hear the voice of water, and resolutely bend his eyes to the printed page . . . only to have the dull thing

fade into a background for the flashing brilliance of a woman's scornful face.

So did the player of the spinnet hold him as in a snare!

So helplessly did he follow after her in spirit!

But that good sense which ever was behind his raillery told him at length that this would never do, so he took to relegating the pleasant dreams to the inner depths of his consciousness where they might lie waiting his voluntary call, and read his Coke upon Littleton and the Virginia Laws. And he had his Livy,—that great feeding ground for the hungry soul wherein a man might vision the peaks of human grandeur, drink at the fountains of nobility.

All these filled the long days to overflowing.

And as Patrick Henry read and idled there a question began to shape itself in his mind, and awake the idler into action; it was to do away forever with that certain word which

young Corton had flung at him on John Fairweather's sill,—namely the question of the clergy.

That excellent gentry were becoming vastly disgruntled over the famous Tobacco Act. A wordy war of pamphlets had first set the Colonies laughing and later stirred up sufficient interest to rob itself of ridicule.

At that time in Virginia the trade of saving souls was worth sixteen thousand pounds of tobacco by the year, and every one was satisfied.

But—a shortness of crop had occasioned a change in payment.

An Act was passed which stipulated that "all persons from whom tobacco was due, were authorized to pay the same either in tobacco or in money, after the rate of sixteen shillings and eight pence per hundred, at the option of the debtor."

Sixteen shillings eight pence,—when the precious weed rose like a rocket to fifty shillings!

They who had been satisfied before with their stipend were now indignant, holding themselves to have been abused, and the flood of protest and recrimination which rolled over the land was full and bitter.

Sheriffs, clerks, attorneys,—all who were tobacco-creditors,—were caught in the King's net, but it remained for the clergy, who were ever of a quick wit, to rise in revolt.

And this they did with vigor.

They did so press home upon the public mind the justice of their plea that it seemed for a time as if they had all the best of the argument, and Mr. Lewis, who had defended to the best of his abilities the cause of the defendants in the test case brought by the Rev. Maury in Hanover County, and which had ended in a sustained demurrer, gave up the cause, acknowledging defeat.

And so it came that, on a certain day when Patrick Henry rode his idle ways upon the turnpike he came face to face with Mr. Francis Lee and Colonel Danby, both of whom

were growers of tobacco. They were deep in worried discussion and it was but natural that, as the three stopped to exchange greetings, the topic on every tongue should continue to hold their attention.

"I tell you, sir," said Colonel Danby waving his crop while his red face grew a shade darker, "why should we, who labor for our livelihood, be forced to share our increased profits with those who, being satisfied once, have not done an extra ounce of work to earn their stipend? I ask you, why?"

The young man thus appealed to smiled dryly.

"Perchance, sir," he said, "St. Peter at the Gate hath advanced the entrance fee of prayer and penance."

"Gently, Mr. Henry," Mr. Lee reproved, "levity is a boomerang, sometimes."

But the red-faced Colonel laughed.

"Mr. Lewis hath quit the job, and where we are to turn for an abler tongue is beyond me. It savors badly for our cause."

Here Patrick Henry, idly fingering the wisps of Roanie's mane, pricked up his ears. He glanced from one anxious face to the other. And then he smiled again, the slow twinkling of gimlet-eyes making his lean face handsome.

"Gentlemen," he said audaciously, "what will you give *me* an I win this suit for you?"

The blank astonishment in both pairs of eyes was most unflattering.

"You?" said both gentlemen together. Then Mr. Lee nodded.

"I do recall that somehow you wheedled the general court into giving you a license—that was some time ago. And what have vou done with it?"

"Kept it," said Patrick, "I like to look at it."

"'Odsblood!" swore the Colonel, "you're right! He is a licensed barrister! But when the ablest man in the Colonies, meaning Mr. John Lewis, hauls down his flag,—what chance would there be for—" "such as you,"

he was about to say but thought better of it. The point did not get by his hearer.

The man on the roan horse became suddenly tightlipped.

"Nevertheless," he said, "I could win that case for you."

Both gentlemen looked at him with speculative eyes, and presently Colonel Danby said naïvely, "We have at least nothing to lose, having already lost."

But Mr. Lee was thinking more deeply.

"Mr. Henry," he said gravely, "tell us of this matter of the license. How did you manage,—your pardon, sir,—to get it from the general court? You lack the education which I have always believed to be requisite."

The man in buckskins laughed softly, waving a grandiloquent hand at the universe.

"Well, sir," he said, "first I went to Tom Jefferson and told him I wanted to be admitted to the bar. 'You're graduated now,' says he. 'I've been studying for six weeks,' I said. It took him some time to get it

through his head that it was not a joke, and then he accompanied me to Mr. Peyton, one of the examiners. And then he ran away and left me—to face the music alone."

"Yes?" prompted his hearer, "and what did Mr. Peyton say?"

Again Patrick smiled at the memory.

"He recalled my indolent youth, for he well knew my father and all my folk, and told me all my shortcomings; spoke of my fiddling and fishing, my good-for-nothingness. I think he was right in that, sir, for I seem to have failed in all I've undertaken so far. There was the store, you know, that my father put me in along with my brother William. The dull shelves—the counters—I could not abide them. And the senseless figures. Why, sir, how could one stick to them when the sky-blue waters called, when the fish lay darkling in every pool where the trees leaned and where the sunlight speckled every glade in the forest? A dead man might—but not I!"

Mr. Lee moved his hands upon his saddle horn, and drew in a deep breath. Instantly he seemed to look abroad across the land, to feel the winds of summer,—of such power had been the few words and the voice that uttered them. But Patrick Henry had come down to the commonplace again.

"I went before the rest of the examiners," he continued, "and they asked me many questions, all of which by the grace of God I was able to answer. One of them, however, swept a hand at the awesome shelves of books and informed me, 'What you do not know of law is there, sir.' But they gave me my license," he finished pensively.

"Out of hand?" queried the Colonel in amaze.

"Not exactly," said Patrick, "Mr. Randolph grilled me hard but finally told me that I defended my opinions well, and that if my industry were but half equal to my genius I would do well and be an ornament to my profession. He also told me," concluded the

speaker, his blue eyes sparkling humorously, "that he would never trust to appearances again."

"Mr. Henry," said Mr. Lee abruptly, "will you ride with us to our destination? There seems something to this matter which warrants a closer look."

And Patrick Henry, the ne'er-do-well, reined his horse about face to go back along the turnpike with two of the Colonies' most responsible personages. Of such small things are the dies of fate made.

Shortly after this conversation on the autumn road there began to be circulated strange rumors which gave rise to merriment and much astonished comment.

"What!" cried Timothy Lovelace to the elder Mr. Corton, "Can this be other than a jest, sir? In the first place, was not the matter of the clergy settled at last session?"

"It was," returned the elder man; "but it

seems that, after all, and the time nearly spent for such action, the planters have decided to appeal."

"And for counsel they present Patrick Henry! 'Odsblood! A royal jest, upon my soul!"

"And the fledgling lawyer hath served his notice of appeal in approved fashion. It bids fair to prove a matter of some amusement,—though I fear somewhat for our friends from the plantations."

"Mistress Pen," said Harry Corton to that much-beloved young person a few days later, "your fighting fiddler has turned to the law. Perchance he will as soundly trounce the judge and jury as he did our friend the slave-buyer. Shall you look on, this time as well?"

The girl's hazel eyes lighted with a smile.

"Without a doubt," she answered, "we have little enough of excitement. And I wager there will be something of gallantry in the sight if our backwoodsman beards the brains of

the triumphant clergy in a mass. I'll lay you a crown on his success."

Corton sighed dolorously.

"I'd lose ten crowns," he said, "an I might win such championing from you."

"Fie, Harry! And don't I know right well that in the winning you would turn away, forgetting all about me, did Sheila Lovelace appear in the offing? One flutter from the lace-end of her kerchief and the world might slide."

"Well," said the young man ingenuously, "were it not for Sheila, Pen, I'd fight every blade in Virginia for you. Art satisfied now? How doth my gallantry compare with that of the fiddler?"

"For words, right bravely, Mr. Corton. For acts,—I had rather not say, recalling the day at the auction."

But though the affair of the appeal brought forth a buzz of laughing raillery, none of it was spilled on the object of mirth himself. Patrick Henry betook himself to his wilder-

ness and none saw him in the interim between the serving of his notice and the day of the trial.

Wagers were laid that he would not appear and there were few takers; though Penelope Dunmore laid five crowns upon him in various ways—that, not only would he appear, but that he would win his case, and that they who watched and listened would be repaid.

"How now, Pen," said her father genially, "why so staunch for this wastrel from the woods? What base you this partisanship upon?"

"His face, sir," said the girl, "its simplicity and honesty, the straight courage and the fire of spirit in his eyes."

On the day of the trial the streets were crowded with equipages, for the people from surrounding counties, stirred by the point at issue, since it so nearly concerned them all, had come in to attend. Powder and patch were there, brocade and silk, fanning their

rosy cheeks, while gallants in gay coats took snuff and gossiped. The planters were there, talking heatedly in groups, and the clergy in smiling cohorts looked on with that nice degree of patronage which portends ultimate triumph.

Already they saw the glow of victory and were benignly genial.

Also there were idlers present—people of small account who knew Patrick Henry and meant to add their jeers to those of his opposers. For where is there one risen above his supposed rank who is not hounded, sometimes even unto death, by some upstart of the rank?

Henry a barrister? Fie! It was a matter for laughter and that greatest of jests—the ridiculing of Aspiration reaching blindly upward!

They were primed for a joke and meant to have it, this lower class who crowded on the outskirts of their betters.

The court-room began to fill and in the win-

try yard the groups still moiled the pros and cons of the issue.

And at last into this unfavorable setting came the man of the hour, Patrick Henry, striding tall and gaunt and looking neither to right nor left.

He was anxiously met and spoken by his constituents, and it was while thus engaged that he looked up across the open way to see approaching none other than that one of all his blood for whom, beside his father, Henry held in deepest reverence,—namely the Reverend Patrick Henry, his uncle. An expression of sharp dismay escaped his lips and Mr. Lee remarked its cause.

"Did you not know that the Reverend Henry is plaintiff in another case of like nature now pending?" he asked, and Patrick shook his head.

The woodsman disengaged himself and with great diffidence approached his uncle's carriage.

"It grieves me, sir," he said simply with a

line of care between the usually smiling eyes, "to see you here."

"Why so?" demanded the elder man, his keen eyes, not unlike his nephew's own, searching him from head to foot.

"Because, sir," said Patrick, "you know that I have never spoken in public, and I fear that I shall be too much overawed by your presence to be able to do my duty by my clients; besides, sir, I shall be obliged to say some very hard things of the clergy and I am unwilling to give pain to your feelings."

"How then, sir," demanded the minister, "do you come to engage in this cause against us?"

"For three reasons," said Patrick promptly, "which I consider good. Firstly,—the clergy did not consider me worthy to retain. Secondly—I know of no moral reason why I should refuse a fee which I need. Thirdly—both my heart and judgment as well as my professional duty are on the side of the people. And now, sir," he continued earnestly,

"you could do me no greater favor than to return home."

The aged clergyman stared at his namesake for a pregnant moment in undisguised amazement. Then his pleasant face broke into a genial smile.

"My boy," he replied, "as to *your* saying hard things of us,—why, you will do yourself the greater harm, and as to my leaving the ground I fear that my presence would be neither here nor there, but since you so earnestly desire it, I shall do as you request."

Whereupon he entered his carriage again drove away.

Thus it was that for the first time in his life Patrick Henry walked up the aisle of a courtroom bent upon the business of the law. At his first appearance a stir moved in the crowded mass, a ripple of laughter went like a wave across its myriad faces.

But as the man strode forward this breath of merriment seemed to wash along the assembly and to fall in this quarter and that to a

murmur, until, when he reached the open space before the judge and turned to face them it was hushed to silence.

For one electric moment he looked at them, then sat down. But one and all had noted his appearance. In deference to the court he had changed his clothes. In his buckskins he was graceful, lithe, at ease, his bronzed face and sunburnt hair blending perfectly to make a seeming of reflected sunlight, an epitome of the open, simple and natural. In the homespun square-cut and cotton shirt, open at the neck, he was another man,—gaunt, ungainly, ill at ease. But even in his uncouthness there was a vague suggestion of power, a commanding quality—something which had hushed the laughter.

The people settled themselves to listen, and the trial opened.

The hum of a multitude quieting was in Patrick Henry's ears, the knowledge that he was held in ridicule by most of it was in his heart, and most disconcerting of all there sat

in the chair of the presiding magistrate none other than his own father!

But there was something in the man, something waiting latent, a force, a power, which no one in that room except himself—and one other—suspected.

So he sat in awkward silence while his opponent opened the cause and stated confidently why, and upon what point of law the clergy demanded damages. He listened while the worthy and eloquent Mr. Lyons lauded his clients to the skies, enlarging upon their benevolence, their chastity and their unselfish services to mankind.

Twenty clergymen, the ablest, most learned and critical men in the colony, packed behind their spokesman, smiled in tolerant and kindly amusement when Mr. Lyons finished with a flourish and rested.

That smile became broader as Patrick Henry, raw in his new estate, rose awkwardly and began to speak.

Was it that pleasant raillery which made

him falter and fumble a moment with his speech? Was it the uneasy and anxious faces of his constituents, the flushed embarrassment of the elder Henry who was seen fairly to shrink and wither in his chair?

Or was it the face of a girl, half hid in the crowd, whose spirited dark eyes and lovely face blazed out like a light in darkness,—Doxey Fairweather come from her father's inn to hear him fail? These things have due effect upon the human will, and for a little time the new barrister fell direfully under them; but not for long.

As a good ship, slipped from its way, rocks and quivers with its first impact with the water and finally finds itself, to become steady on an even keel, master of its element,—so Patrick Henry found himself in these waters of adversity.

For the first time the eloquence of thought and vision which had been mute within him, found expression. The awkwardness dropped away from him, as a garment. His shoulders

lifted, his head flung itself up and back, his blue eyes began to shine and sparkle as none who knew him had ever seen them sparkle,—and he caught up his audience with swift and headlong genius.

What he said none could afterward state with accuracy.

They only knew that from the very beginning, when he first flung up his head and shook the stammering from his silver tongue, they were his astounded captives, that here and there they found themselves leaning forward as in a trance, listening with emotions that ran to his sharp bidding like slaves. That they were indignant—thrilled—and reduced to quivering sympathy by turns!

And for what? The price of tobacco!

Afterward when men of sane mentality and judicious character discussed the thing they were at loss to comprehend it, a bit chagrined at memory of their stirred emotions in such a trivial cause.

But in that enchanted hour when this man

spoke, Penelope Dunmore sat with tight-shut hands and saw a vision,—while Mr. Jefferson gazed at his friend with fascinated eyes, and Colonel Danby gaped in his white beard, too astonished to observe the niceties of deportment for which he was noted.

Patrick Henry swept on like a torrent.

The tension became strained, the silence deathlike. The complacence of the clergy vanished, fright took its place, and even a seeming of guilt fell upon these good men who considered their ground right and well taken, —of such persuasive power was this homely orator!

As the pitch of his invective rose, as the whip of his scorn cut viperishly in the stillness, they rose in a body and fled the courtroom!

The hushed mass drew breath that whistled with the tension. The magistrate on his bench looked at this stranger who was his son, and tears ran down his cheeks.

The jury, shaken to its foundations, for what reason they scarcely knew, filed out and

immediately returned with a verdict of damages—*for one penny!*

And the case was won. Patrick Henry's sun had risen,—and it was never to set. The buzz that rose in the courtyard was vague but vehement.

Here and there one laid hold of some fragment of that speech which had swung from tobacco to the English court in its insolent daring, and flailed it bitterly, for there were among his listeners that day men who were to become his enemies.

As Patrick Henry came out upon the courthouse steps, Mr. Jefferson, down upon the pave below, stopped and looked back at him, moved on, and again stopped to turn his keen eyes backward. He, too, was seeing visions of the future.

But in a group of younger men bold Tim Lovelace was saying hotly: "Heard you that about 'unrest'? Marry! The man's a whig!"

And Timothy, too, turned curious eyes toward the tall figure on the courthouse steps.

Mr. Payton, along with Mr. Jefferson, approached Patrick Henry.

"From this day, sir," said the former, "I shall no more upbraid myself for giving you a license at the law. I am astounded."

"Pay me my wager, Henry," said Mistress Penelope a few days later to Mr. Corton, "What think you now of my insight?"

"I think more than I say," returned the discomfited loser darkly, "though I might intimate that I believe you had whispered in his Honor's ear or ever the trial began."

Word of the trial went swiftly about the country and Patrick Henry, who had disappeared to his rivers and forests once more, was talked of in every tap-room and about every planter's table.

But there were those who spoke of him and his achievement with gravity and none so pleased a front. Among these was Governor Dunmore, himself, and that handsome stranger, von Kneibling, from London Town.

"I like not this fiddling wastrel's ability,"

said the Governor to a circle of his friends, while the stirrup-peg went around. "It is ever a bad sign when a commoner gets himself talked about with praise. It hath a tendency to aspirations and flights of fancy."

"For which same many a good man has lost his head," said Doctor Janway.

"And many another will," supplemented the German quickly. "I wonder that you, sir, permit him to roam at large."

The Governor stared at the speaker.

"What? Confine a man for so laudable a thing as bringing peace among disputants? I rather countenance the performance, myself. I merely spoke of a condition in the abstract."

"Well," said Mr. Merwin, a barrister of marked ability and held in great esteem in all the countryside, "he is a lighter of flames, I will say that for him. I should not relish him against me, an I were on trial for my life, either guilty or innocent."

"Nor I," agreed Mr. Randolph. And the opinion crystallized and stood.

THE RUMBLING

CHAPTER VI

THE RUMBLING

THOSE discussions which the new barrister had so fearlessly mentioned were taking place with more and more frequency. In Richmond little groups of grave men spoke guardedly of the intolerable conditions which the Crown pressed home upon the Colonies, of the constantly increasing armies quartered upon them, of the ceaseless effort to make the military independent of and superior to the civil power. This matter of the soldiery was a festering sore in the Colonial side. The new country, peaceful, busily productive, was only desirous of harmony and genial treatment from its government. It wanted its own laws, its own legislation, and these were interfered with ever and anon. It seemed a grinning perversity sat behind all its attempts

to establish for itself that right and sane jurisdiction which it so sorely needed, being so far across seas from the seat of government. Taxes were imposed under which the planters smarted. A thousand oppressions and harassments daily irked the struggling New World, cruelties unnecessary and deadening to its growth.

"I tell you, gentlemen," said Mr. Francis Lee of Jamestown on a day in that uneasy summer, "it is usage of slaves we undergo, nothing less. Who else could, or would, bear the deprivation of natural rights such as the Colonies bear, and stand the yoke in meekness?"

"Slaves? You say *slaves,* sir?" cried that Mr. Bainridge Courthy who had never ceased to pine for the cliffs of Dover, his pale face flushed with passion. "You use the word upon His Majesty's subjects?"

"I do, sir," answered the other steadily, "and stand by my word."

"Yes, and I abet it," broke in Mr. Carroll

of Carrollton. "We have been too long-suffering, and have reaped as reward the increased pressure of tyranny. I turn sleepless in my bed of nights, thinking on the issue."

"And many another in the districts north, south and everywhere," said a Mr Walton, who was up on matters appertaining to the moving of his tobacco crop in Georgia. "I know of more than I could count from now till night who have thus vitally at heart the same unbearable things."

"Then, gentlemen," said Mr. Courthy, tensely, "I term you Whigs and traitors, and beg you will excuse my presence."

And, bowing stiffly, he was for leaving them in a white heat of anger.

But Mr. Carroll dropped a heavy hand on his shoulder and swung him back to face them. Mr. Carroll's eyes were blazing, too.

"Sir," he said, " I like not to seem discourteous, nor to speak of what none mentions who respects another's tragedy, but I fail to see,

before God, how you, of all men in Virginia, can stand so blindly for a King who gave you practical banishment for—a mistaken political zeal, let us say, which caused you to blunder in the performance of a royal commission. You, of all men in Virginia, I repeat, seem to bear the heaviest load of injustice, since it is sharply personal. Then, sir, I say, How now?—How now can you bear your yoke in supine meekness?"

Mr. Courthy's poor face quivered as if he had been struck. He flung back his shoulders, and lifted his head with a regal motion, gazing straight in the tense faces before him.

"I am a loyal subject of His Majesty, King George," he said, with a gallant ring to his voice, "and as such would give my life."

Before that high idealism, mistaken though it seemed to every man present, Mr. Carroll dropped his hand and held it out.

"Forgive me, sir," he said. "Every man to his constraining conscience. Who am I, to question yours?"

The other took the proffered hand—and it was to be for the last time, as circumstances afterward proved—bowed to the circle, and withdrew.

"A year ago," said Francis Lee, "and each and every one of us would have struck the mouth that called us traitor!"

"Aye," returned Mr. Walton, "but now we must bear with it in patience, since to the majority we may seem to merit it. I pray God to hasten the day when that majority will open their eyes to the same light that we are seeing on the horizon."

Speech such as this was heard among the chosen at many places; in certain tap-rooms in the towns, in ball-rooms, and along the peaceful roads where the elm trees drowsed. Men smouldered and smarted beneath their wrongs; thought, and struggled with their consciences and their loyalty. Something was stirring to its borning in the heart of the strong young land—something destined to dominate the earth.

And here and there went one who spoke—and men listened.

On the stream's edge great visions came to Patrick Henry, sitting in idleness, his line a-jerking with its catch, the roan horse dreaming in hip-dropped rest on the bank beside him. Often the man's blue eyes stared unseeing across the quiet waters to where the green trees, dipping their slim fingers in the placid surface, made a fine background for the flaming pictures that he saw. For this simple man of the forest peered into the future with the vision of prophecy. He beheld a country peopled in every part, magnificent and proud; a nation which was its own possession, sane and glad with liberty.

He saw freedom rise like a phœnix; and he knew there would be flame and ash below. He saw danger and death and heartbreak rampant all up and down the land, yet he saw glory shining through the murk like the face of God.

Ah! what did not Patrick Henry see on the background of the still green trees across the drowsy waters!

Like the peasant girl of France, he heard his voices, beheld his visions. And he, too, carried them before the people.

Sometimes, among a few friends, he spoke words that might have cost him his head; but the gist of his speech filtered out in secret ways to spread like oil on water. It reached here and there, sent eyes a-following him when he appeared in the streets of Jamestown.

But Patrick Henry was not the only one who who felt the great, vague stir. Mr. Washington and his friends were meeting and talking constantly, and the greatest gravity attended them.

Day by day more men were becoming talked about; more names were coming under the opprobrious title of Whig; strong friendships were being severed by difference of opinion.

Poor Mr. Bainridge was in a constant fever

of anger and agitation; and the Randolphs, old and young, cut sharply every one of their acquaintances who did not ring clear Tory.

Governor Dunmore sent out rigorous warnings to stop the dangerous talk and posted the square of Jamestown with threats of dire and severe punishment to be meted out to all and any who did not heed.

The rising wave of unrest reached the sheltered boudoirs of the ladies of the Colonies, and many a pretty mouth soiled itself with what was termed treason, among them that of Euphenie La Porte; for this willful and imperious girl dearly loved strife and danger of any sort, and the very thought of rebellion fired her from head to foot.

But not to her friend Penelope did she say one word of this—Penelope, whom she adored devoutly.

Sheila Lovelace was another matter, however. For where was there ever sound of drums, or the faint far promise of them, that did not rouse the Irish heart? Even before

her brother let go and flung himself into the new movement with all the glowing fervor of his nature, Sheila was a whig at heart. So these two girls whispered of the same great things that sent men talking in secret groups —fair flowers of girls, dallying with shadows of flames!

It was when the summer was half done that Timothy Lovelace felt the touch of the sacred fire. He stopped Mr. Jefferson one day and, with a white face and shaking lips, confronted him.

"Tom," he said tensely, "there was a night at the Cock's Feather in the early spring when you and I looked hard in each other's eyes and saw there grave things that wrung our hearts. Recall you that occasion?"

"I do," said Mr. Jefferson, and waited.

"I was hot in my loyalty to His Majesty that night, and did presume to question you for standing by in friendliness to that shabby commoner, who was even then in bad repute among all loyalists. Today I beg your in-

dulgence for my youth and temper. Today I, too, say, as you said then, 'a man's intentions are between him and his God. I, too, know what I am saying and what my words may mean."

The boy wet his pale lips while his merry eyes were dark with the excitement of the times. Mr. Jefferson smiled, putting forth his hand to crush that of his friend therein. The mounting light of patriotism was in his face.

"Thank God for you, Timothy!" he said fervently. "I do thank Him for you! Such as you and I—and many of the young gentlemen of Jamestown and Richmond whom I might name—cannot rest long beneath the iron heel of oppression. The Hessian blood is intolerable, pressing home its power. How long, think you, can we endure as we are? How long allow our laws to be abolished at will, our charters taken away, our Representative Houses to be dissolved? How long bow to a tyranny that grinds us with a thousand

studied wrongs? An we are men and Americans we will revolt. And I say, for one, the sooner the better!"

Timothy Lovelace came to attend the small gatherings which strove so earnestly to get at the root of this momentous matter; and there he sometimes met and listened to Patrick Henry, whose wondrous spiritual fire clothed his words with magic. And, be it said to the young blade's honor, he went once and gave his hand to the lank man of the backwoods whom he had once reviled. Patrick Henry took it, hardly recognizing its owner, for he was so high in the clouds of patriotism that the immediate things of earth seemed nebulous that day.

Word of Patrick Henry by this time had flown all over the Colonies.

He was called Whig and traitor, and other things as bad; yet there were many who swore by him as a man of true vision. The great travail of the future took hold on him and sent him restlessly here and there, wherever

were gathered those who would listen to him; for he had begun to discover that he bore between his lips a charm. Always when he spoke men listened; and he knew dimly that when he was in full power of his simple speech he could swing them hither and yon as he willed.

There was that in his persuasive voice which played upon the human heart like—like—a woman's fingers on a spinnet's keys!

Those spinnet keys at the Cock's Feather Inn had struck deep in among the melodies of his nature, and he seemed on many occasions to hear again their nameless tunes sighing in the twilight of the tender spring.

But the man had scant time for romancing, what with his constantly recurring visions, his rides of forty, sixty and an hundred miles from this meeting point to that, and the terrible gravity of the moment.

He did, however, recall, with a thrill, the earnest face of the young girl that day by the courthouse door, what time he pleaded his fa-

mous case; and once he presumed upon that memory.

It was twilight again of a silent summer's day, and Doxey, alone for once, since her father had gone to Richmond on some errand of provender for the inn, sat playing her airs, as was her wont, in the outer room.

Upon her spirit had fallen, too, the unrest of the times, and her mouth that smiled so often had taken on new lines of staid repression. The pouring music that came from beneath her fingers was of a different fibre from those elusive tunes which she was wont to play some several months before, being in accord, unconsciously, with the surcharged feeling of the day. It streamed into the darkness of the warm night with martial seeming, with a vague forecast of drums and the tread of marching feet. The girl's fair face was lifted in the shadows, and it bore the look of martyrs—the keen, rapt look of one who serves—a God, a country, or—a king. She beheld in fancy the glory of her sovereign, as she had been taught

to do since babyhood. And she was Tory-born.

But youth is versatile, given to quick transition, and mood follows mood like the ripples of wind in grass.

Presently her sweet face drooped in pensive tenderness, and she fell to playing "The Rose and Thorn." If she fancied a tall form darkened the shadows by the door, she was none to blame. Thus she played on and on—her maiden thoughts as pure and shadowy as moonlight on thistle-down—so that she did not hear at first the deeper, finer, softer timbre of the music that seemed to flood the night. It seemed only a deepening of her spiritual mood, a richer appreciation of the tender song.

At last her fingers drooped on the keys, stopped of their own volition, as their owner lost herself in her reflections, and for a full minute the girl did not realize *that the music still went on!*

Out of the dew-damp night, beyond her window and the open door, the strains of "The

Rose and Thorn" still trembled with their inimitable longing! Doxey Fairweather opened her beautiful mouth in astonishment, and listened. Without a doubt, a spell was on the forest—witchcraft was here—for a sobbing voice was pleading with the lover in the song, even as her spinnet had pleaded,—but in what exquisitely golden tones, what heart-breaking melody!

She held her breath and listened. One capable hand was laid to her heart, as any of her daintier sisters of the aristocracy might have laid their rose-leaf fingers. She was on the moment all girl, and the martial music was forgotten.

Nearer came the plaintive voice, like a disembodied soul, drifting across the dust of the beaten yard, drew near to the dusky door; and the maid beheld against the stars a tall form with a violin upon its shoulder.

As the last strains of "The Rose and Thorn" died piteously upon the night she thought of the words of her father after the episode of

the night of the card game—"a fishing, fidding ne'er-do-well"—and knew upon the instant that the man in the outer shadow was Patrick Henry.

But the exquisite blending of the instruments, so that she had not known where the spinnet left off and the violin began, was irresistible, and she sat still as a mouse, half trembling with a vague delight.

For a long moment no word was spoken.

Then the man sighed, lowered the violin, and waited. There was something imperious in that silent waiting, and the girl felt it.

But she did not move; and presently Patrick Henry spoke.

"Mistress," he said softly, in that deep voice which seemed to have such power, "can you resist 'The Rose and Thorn?' It drew me once—and I have followed since. It lives in my heart. Will you not come to its call, even so far as the sill of the door?"

Doxey rose and went toward him, not of her own will, assuredly—for that drew a little line

THERE WAS SOMETHING IMPERIOUS IN THAT SILENT WAITING

of uncertainty between her straight brows—but after a fashion helplessly. She folded her arms across her girlish bosom and leaned against the opposite lintel, looking at him in the dusk. She saw the lean hawk's face of him, the high brow beneath the brushed-back hair that was innocent of powder, the piercing blue eyes, and the firm mouth that shook at times with tenderness. Those lips, she felt, could set in a line of rock-like sternness, or tremble to the verge of sobs. There was something about their changing expression that fascinated her.

"Sir," she said, gently, "an I were you I should not come here, for there is no welcome for you."

"Ah!" said the man quickly, "there speaks the woman by-ordinary whom I thought I had found once—and still find. I like your straightforwardness, Mistress. It smacks of honesty."

"But it costs me much in kindness, sir," said Doxey, "for I like not to hurt another,

yet no lighter of flames against my king is welcome here."

"A lighter of flames?" mused Patrick Henry. "Aye, a good word, Mistress, I vow. You have well named me—'a lighter of flames'! But I came not here to talk of tragic things; only of a man's loneliness, and the sound of a song that will not be stilled. Will you not listen, even for a little space?"

The girl was frowning and her fingers picked at her kerchief's pipings. She thought vexedly of the three fish wrapped in the mulberry leaves; and again of the flash of this man's hand at his hip, and his quick challenge to Lord Lester once—"an you will fight I'll pin that lie upon your lips!"

His uncouthness of manner in the matter of the gift yet his lean grace in his worn buckskins! His smiling acceptance of the scornful term of Whig—yet those mobile lips curled up at the corners!

These contradictions whirled in her head, and still she stood in silence, picking at her

kerchief. Patrick Henry then reached out a hand and laid it lightly upon her fingers, stilling them and drawing them into his palm.

"We are man and maid, Mistress," he said, in a whisper that thrilled her with its timbre; "man and maid in the springtime of our lives. Why should we let the harsh things of destiny drive us apart, when we both hear alike the wistful pleading of 'The Rose and Thorn?'"

Against her will, as if the fumes of her father's ale had mulled her brain, Doxey felt herself drawn helplessly toward this man. She caught the fresh scent of forest and stream that clung about his garments, was conscious of his hand, the coming touch of his arm about her shoulders.

With a supreme effort, as when one awakes from an appalling dream at night, she wrenched herself from him both physically and spiritually.

"I am not free to every stranger, sir," she said hotly, "that rides to my father's inn! Think you to take for granted the privileges

I have given as yet to none? Have I so conducted myself that you think thus lightly of me?"

There was in her voice so much outraged maidenliness, such keen distress and, it must be said, rage as well, that Patrick Henry loosed the hand he held and fell back from her a pace.

"I meant not to offend," he answered humbly; "and you should know, who are so keen, what was in my heart this night—what of tenderness and high dreams. But see, Mistress—I am in the dust before you for anything wherein I may have blundered. I beg your favor and forgiveness."

He dropped on one knee, took up her kirtle's hem and, laying it to his lips, kissed it with reverence.

Doxey Fairweather opened and closed her clenched hand, while her face worked with conflicting feelings.

As the man rose to his tall height, towering beside her, he held out the violin and its bow.

"Will you keep it, Mistress?" he asked, sadly. "I shall have no use for it now, since I can no longer play 'The Rose and Thorn,' which hath so illy served me this summer's night. If the time ever comes when you will listen, send me it back—and the flowers will bloom in the forest again."

He turned from her, put his fingers to his lips, and blew a sharp whistle. At its imperious call a big roan horse trotted quickly from the shadow of a nearby tree and stopped beside its master.

Patrick Henry leaped lithely to the saddle and waited just a moment, looking down.

"Good even, Mistress," he said gently. "I —still believe." Then he was gone.

The girl stood by the lintel holding the old violin, still warm from his hand, and there was a tiny trembling at the corners of her lips.

"I'LL RIDE AGAIN!"

CHAPTER VII

"I'LL RIDE AGAIN, YOUR EXCELLENCY!"

SECRECY was being abandoned. Friends were cleaving from friends. Families were being divided. Loyalists and radicals frowned at each other in the streets of the towns. Coaches that had been wont to stop on the shady pike, while fair faces peered laughing from their windows to gossip of a thousand friendly things, now passed at a sharp trot. At rout and party the list of those invited was being sharply cut. Governor Dunmore passed among his people with a grave face. Once he stood so long and looked at Mr. Washington before taking his hand that many a foot shifted uneasily, many a face lost color.

"Zounds, sir!" said Mr. Bainridge to a group of gentlemen later, "it seems to me the young man's eyes must have fallen from sheer

guilt of intention, but, as I stand here, he did not even falter in his bow, there was no flicker of his eyelids! A most astounding thing!"

At the Governor's house many gentlemen came and went. Bateaux came down the river from the upper plantations and loyal subjects talked of King George in the heat of allegiance and good wine, pledging him with flowers of speech. Word of all this went back in the ships, as perhaps the speakers meant it should, and carried their names into high circles.

But in Virginia there was more to do than raise a cup and shout fealty, for the faint flames that had flickered here and there were now fluttering house-top high.

Open meetings were beginning to be held. At some of these Patrick Henry, the unknown backwoodsman, stood like a gallant lance and spoke—a second Daniel. Whatever he touched with his running fire of speech burst into flame.

"I tell you, mine friend," said Herr von

Kneibling to His Excellency the Governor, "this man is a danger and a menace. I warn you again, at large he should not be."

And this time His Excellency listened with a frown.

"You may be right, sir," he said; "yet I like not to touch off the powder which I feel sure is laid in him."

From beyond the table where the two men sat over a pewter of ale Penelope raised her hazel eyes and looked at them. She was working a sampler, a wondrous thing of gay woolens that had sweet green trees drowsing by a silent stream, her fair fingers traveling slowly while she listened. In a deep chair near her side Lord Lester lay stretched at his graceful length and paid her pretty speeches from time to time. This handsome young man was a favorite with all the fair of the Colonies, both matron and maid, and he was somewhat spoiled with over-much indulgence. Now his golden brows drew down and he flecked his ruffles idly.

"The German hath a keen insight for the future," he said to Penelope. "We think alike."

"Fie!" said the girl quickly, "you compliment yourself, my lord."

"How now? Compliment myself? I did but praise another's wit."

"And compare it to your own."

The nobleman smiled, regarding her.

'Though you catch me hard and pin me to earth without remorse, Mistress Pen," he said, "I must still bow to you. That pretty tongue of yours is ever a delight, even to its victims."

But the girl had forgotten him, for her father was speaking tensely of the situation in the Colonies and of the very grave seeming of those who spoke of rights and tyrannies.

Ever when the gentlemen spoke thus she must needs listen, and for some unknown reason the heart in her breast was troubled, though she could not believe that Virginia would ever turn disloyal to her sovereign across the seas.

Lord Lester idly watched her, taking clean joy of her powdered hair; for indoors Mistress Penelope was a mirror of Dame Fashion, with her dark brows, like twin crescents on the milky whiteness of her skin, the droop of her long lashes, and the curve of her peach-bloom cheeks.

"How doubly fair she is!" he thought with a sigh. "Sweeter than any maid in Virginia —excepting one!"

And he fell to thinking on that one who went about her humble tasks beside the Jamestown pike, lowly of station, yet so true, so kind, so fair, that he would fain take her to his heart and home—yet who would have none of him!—a tavern-keeper's daughter, who shook her dark head when a nobleman spoke of wedlock! It was incomprehensible, and served but to give added spurs to his already wild desire.

Here a serving-maid came softly in and bent at her mistress' shoulder—Patience Conwell, a-bloom with well-being—to whisper

some private word. Penelope arose with eagerness.

"My lord," she said, "I have word of the arrival but now of Euphenie and Sheila, together with Harry Corton and Brithan Randolph. Will you come to greet them with me?"

In the outer hall there was swift chatter and shine of bright eyes, as the three girls fell upon each other with kisses hidden in the depths of their bonnets, while the youths looked enviously on.

"An I were a bonnet, my lord," said Harry Corton wistfully, "I'd give my hope of heaven."

"A worthless wager, Harry," flashed Penelope. "Why not stake your snuff-box? 'twould be in better taste."

"And you were a man, Pen," came back Mr. Corton, swiftly, "I'd call you out for that. Think you I am a heathen?"

The gay party went into the large room beyond the hall, where the guests of the gover-

nor's family were wont to gather, and soon the rafters rang with youthful laughter. A negress brought them ale and little sugared cakes, and they chattered of all the things that youth finds vitally important; the coming rout of Mistress Cartwright's, the probable arrival of the good ship *Golden Hope* with merchandise, the late decree of fashion that had tabooed the patch upon the chin and set it high on the cheek instead.

Presently the Governor came in, along with the big blond Hessian, Herr von Kneibling, and straightway Euphenie La Porte had eyes for none other, making room for him beside her upon the divan where she sat, and smiling up at him with her captivating air.

The windows were open, for though the summer was fast giving way to autumn, there was still a purple warmth to the atmosphere and a golden haze rested upon the forests.

Lord Lester, looking idly out, could scarce keep his thoughts from the still aisles of trees

that lined the Jamestown pike, of the sun upon the sill of the Cock's Feather Inn, so deep was he still in his reflections set up by Penelope's beauty. He hardly heard the gay badinage about him, the protests of Brithan Randolph that he could be true to one woman and faithful to a dozen others. But presently, as he sat thus a bit detached, he became conscious of a turmoil some distance down the street which passed by the house of Mr. Merwin. There seemed some considerable gathering of people in the dust of the road, and there was a hum of voices, like the sustained note of hiving bees. He put out his fine white hand, drew the curtain back a bit the better to look, and saw that the disturbance was approaching. In a moment more the sound of its oncoming stilled the merry voices within the room and the rest fell a-listening.

"What now?" asked His Excellency, coming forward with his round stomach leaning over the nobleman's shoulder and his red face at the opening. "Who comes?"

At this, the crowd, which was a small one, surged up before the house and thrust forward a slim slip of a lad with pale hair, and flaming eyes of grey in a paler face.

He stood tall amid them and looked defiantly at the faces in the window.

Godwin Praly, a roundsman, and a bailiff, stepped forward, pulling his forelock. He had come not so long from a game-keeper's lodge in England and brought his manners with him.

"This youth," he said, pompously, after due recognizance of His Excellency, " 'as spoke traitorously 'hin th' h'open street, yer H'excellency, saying h'as 'ow th' Colonies are a law to themselves an' must 'ave their h'own gover'ment an' freedom! 'Tis not th' first time, h'either, an' so h'I took 'im in custody to wait your pleasure."

Governor Dunmore's face became suddenly darker. He looked hard at the youth, with his hands upon the sill of the window, and for a moment was silent.

"A traitor, eh?" he said slowly. "Taken in the act of seditious speech! I have heard of —such."

A silence fell, and all the gaiety was quenched within, as if a cloud had passed across the sun.

For a long time he stood so, his hands growing red and then purple as they pressed upon the sill. It seemed he struggled with some tenet of his nature which was loath to give under. None spoke, and the silence became strained. Then there was a movement behind, and that blond emissary from overseas, whose voice was ever for thumbs-down, pushed forward to the Governor's side.

"The time—the place—the man, mine friend," he said clearly, "one bold stroke now may kill sedition and treason. I suggest that you make it—*now!*"

The Governor roused himself. The blank look of indecision and turmoil was on his purple face.

"But how?" he asked.

Instantly Herr von Kneibling changed. His thick nostrils dilated. His small pale eyes grew smaller still with a look of excitement and pleasure.

"A horse!" he said quickly; "a rope! Drag the rebel through the streets of the town, that all traitors to the Crown may see how it deals with disloyalty! Virginia needs strong hands —strong measures."

His Excellency struck a fist on the window sill.

"Done!" he cried.

Turning, he called for a servant and gave a quick order.

In the stir that followed there was a gasp from the little French maid, Euphenie, and she looked with startled eyes at von Kneibling.

She put a timid hand upon his great arm, at which he bent to her instantly.

"Surely," she whispered, "surely you jest, sir? You cannot mean it?"

"Mean it?" he laughed, tossing up his hand-

some head. "Yes—and worse! This is no time for softness. Why in a little while treason will be sweeping the Colonies! Treason can be only wiped out in blood!"

At that cold ruthlessness Euphenie shrank back as if she had beheld a monster, and groped for the hand of her bosom friend, Sheila Lovelace, who stood near, and whose breast was rising and falling with long breaths.

"I—cannot—believe!" gasped Euphenie. "Sheila—will they do this horror?"

"Hush," said Sheila. "Wait."

A negro came running from the stables holding by the halter rope a fine black gelding, wild and ramping, excited by the throng.

In less time than seemed possible, the accused lad was tied and trussed, his feet bound together and fastened to the animal's tail.

"Who'll ride?" cried the Governor. "We'll teach these traitors!"

"I will—gladly," offered von Kneibling,

pushing through, and vaulting to the gelding's back without a touch of hand—a pretty piece of horsemanship.

"Clear the way!" he cried, gathered the rope, struck his mount, and instantly was away down the dusty street, the unspeakable bundle bouncing at the horse's heels. A great smother of dust arose, then cleared, and the group stood transfixed, watching. The German was a master horseman, for he controlled the wild young animal with the halter rope alone, terrified though it was.

The Governor's face was twitching with unknown emotions. Those of the group were white—for this was an unprecedented and unpardonable thing. For once in his life Lord Dunmore had forgotten the ladies present.

"Rebels!" he muttered. "Traitors!"

A distance down the road the German turned and came thundering back. Harry Corton wet his lips.

"Do you mean—death—sir?" he asked diffidently. But the Governor did not hear him.

Then it was that Sheila Lovelace did a brave thing. She loosed Euphenie's clinging hand and caught His Excellency's arm in a strong grip.

"Sir!" she cried—"Stop him! A lesson is a lesson—but this is murder!"

Out of the whirling dust they could see von Kneibling's fair face as he neared, with the hair blowing back, the full lips parted in a smile.

"God!" said Lord Lester, stirred from his habitual lethargy, his hands closing and opening.

At that sympathetic groan he felt a touch upon his shoulder and turned his head. The softly powdered hair of Penelope brushed his cheek, for her face was hidden against his coat, and she was shaking as with a chill. He passed an arm about her and drew her back, turning her inward at the door.

"Enough!" cried Brithan Randolph sharply. "This is not war as yet, sir! We are Vir—"

He did not finish his words, for there came

upon the air the sharp crack of a rifle.

They saw the rider's face lift with the upward plunge of the black horse, which flung itself high in its stride and fell sprawling, dead as a stone.

Displaying his wonderful ability, von Kneibling sprang clear and was upon his feet instantly, whirling to face the man who came riding down upon him from the fringe of trees that marched to the town's edge—a man, on a big roan horse, whose face was white with deadly wrath, whose fringed buckskins fluttered at knee and hip, whose rifle was at his shoulder, with death in its throat for the first who made a false move!

"Stand!" cried Patrick Henry. "Stand—and cut loose that boy! I give you two minutes—work!"

Panting, his face sobered but sneering, the German stooped and cut the bundle from the dead horse. It was a pitiful bundle, covered with blood and dust, inert, helpless, its young eyes closed, its fair head drooping idly. That

it lived at all was only evidenced by the moaning breath that came from the parted lips.

Patrick Henry's own lips were shaking with a rage beyond control. His blue eyes, cold as steel and narrow, were steady and boring. His rifle never moved.

"Bring him!" he said sharply. "Pick him up carefully. Carefully—you swine! If you so much as drag a foot, I'll kill you!"

Von Kneibling, his eyes shifting over the group on the Governor's steps for sign of succor, did as he was told, exactly. He was a big man and powerful, and he lifted the stripling like a sheaf of grain.

He carried him and laid him across Patrick Henry's saddle-bow, the woodsman watching each move for treachery. It was there in the German's shifting eyes, his calculating face. But a knife hung on the other's belt and the hand on the rifle's butt hovered to the drop.

Von Kneibling backed away toward the others. The muzzle of the gun traveled with his

every step. Then the man in the saddle touched the roan horse with his heels and it, too, backed carefully, step by step, the rifle finally covering the whole group, men and women.

At the door's lintel Penelope Dunmore's ashen face was lifted with a martial look that swept across the heads below straight to that other.

"Once more," she called clearly in the straining silence, "I have beheld a man!"

The newcomer turned in his saddle as the roan horse swung and headed slowly toward the sheltering forest. He looked back along the rifle's barrel, promising death with every step. When the boles of the trees hid him from view a sigh went up from the group, and each one looked at his neighbor with new eyes.

On the top step Penelope Dunmore looked coldly into her father's face.

"I am disgraced," she said, "and saddened, sir."

She held out her hand to Lord Lester, who took it gently and led her in.

Euphenie La Porte drew her wide-flounced skirt aside as von Kneibling came near, and there was a hard set to her cupid's mouth; while Sheila Lovelace left the Governor's house without the courtesy of a farewell—for the first time in her life.

Harry Corton accompanied her in painful silence, while Brithan followed with Euphenie after a stiff and formal leave-taking.

The episode marked an epoch in the happy life of the gay company, which was never to be the same again.

When they were alone Herr von Kneibling, wiping the sweat from his face, regarded the Governor with chagrin.

"The arch-rebel!" he said bitterly—"and away he gets! The blackest traitor in the Colonies! Him we must capture or all hell will be loose in Virginia soon. And I shall be glad to ride again, Your Excellency—more than glad."

YOUNG HEARTS

CHAPTER VIII

YOUNG HEARTS

PATRICK HENRY'S good roan horse was lean and hard. The turnpikes knew its hurrying hoofs by night, and by day it threaded the deeper byways of the forest. Whenever there might be a patriot to strengthen, a sleeping one to waken, a smouldering heart to fan to flame, there went the man in his old buckskins, and there went the passionate fire of his speech. Now and again he passed the Cock's Feather Inn, but he gave it no glance, never turned his head that way; though once Doxey Fairweather stood by the open door, a deep flush staining her cheeks, a light glowing in her eyes.

In the heart of the maid a-many things were struggling.

Loyalty burned like a sacred flame and

courage was high in her, and the man who had played her "The Rose and Thorn" was black in her eyes with treason. Therefore she set her lips and dropped her glance, and would not listen to the memory of that enchanted night in spring.

But she would not listen, either, when young Lord Lester, fair and handsome, in his laces and broidered clothes, leaned from his saddle at her father's door and spoke to her of love. The yearning in his heart spoke in his voice and he offered her again his name in wedlock.

"Nay," said Doxey softly, "I like not to deny you, my lord, since I know well the honor which you do me. But would you have a friend for wife, in place of lover?"

Lord Lester groaned and raised a hand to drop it hopelessly, for the girl's clear eyes spoke truth.

"There is perhaps another?" he asked.

"No," she answered, "no other."

"I had thought, perhaps of—the woodsman,

Mistress, who sat here in your door that night—"

"Sir!" cried Doxey Fairweather, while the deep flush rose in her face again, "you connect me with a *traitor?*"

"Forgive me. But the man is a force. All loyal Virginia has begun to fear him, and he ever seems to arrive at the proper time."

"There is no proper time for such at the Cock's Feather Inn," she answered coldly. "We here are loyal to our King."

And so it was, while the golden year was slipping to its end, the dark cloud gathered more dismally day by day over the little group of friends who make this story.

There were no more gay parties at the Governor's house, but rather many gatherings of black-browed men who talked endlessly behind closed doors.

Penelope worked her samplers in sweet gravity. She missed unspeakably her two friends, Sheila Lovelace and Euphenie La Porte, who sent her long girlish letters to the

effect that they loved her still, but that, since they had both turned Whig, they could not honorably darken her father's door.

Terrible things were being whispered—of gatherings of the traitors at Richmond, and of their scattering by the soldiery as rioters and agitators; of Mr. Washington and Mr. Jefferson being in the midst of these, and of the bitter disappointment of those loyalists who had been their friends.

"I cannot believe," said Mr. Merwin, "that our young men are in their right minds. I pray they may yet be proven insane, for then we could forgive them. A sickness—yes! Treason—never!"

But as the days passed the gravity deepened everywhere.

"Your Excellency," cried Mr. Randolph once, "what we had thought child's play is man's work now! The rebels are drilling in the streets of Richmond!"

And so they were.

Secession seethed. The soldiery and the

paid minions of King George had more than they could do, and the word *rioters* had given place to *enemies.*

Warfare seemed imminent, though the loyalists could not yet believe.

Everywhere warnings and appeals appeared in the King's name, but seemed for once to have lost their potency.

Boston and Philadelphia were gathering arms and drilling, too.

The country was smouldering, needing but a touch to fire it into open rebellion. And in the minds of a few brave men this touch, this torch, was slowly taking form. Mr. Washington, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Hancock, Mr. Francis Lee, Mr. Walton from Georgia, and a dozen others met and talked earnestly. There was danger ahead, and death loomed from the unknown future, but these gallant hearts were stout and calm. These clear and honest eyes looked down the reaches to posterity and saw there—glory! And so they talked and decided—and the Colonies waited

in the balance that was beginning to swing.

On a gorgeous day in early autumn Penelope Dunmore sat weaving a lace upon a frame in the sun-flecked garden behind her father's house. The great beauty of her face was somewhat thinned, for secret trouble ate her. The girl grieved unceasingly for her young mates, denied her by the stern exigencies of the time, and the flying rumors troubled her. She was, and had ever been, loyal to her liege, as was her father and all his house, but the feeling in her was one of ordered quiet, of settled fact, of commonplace—like the sunlight or the rain. This fire of partisanship, which ran like a tongue of flame among the Colonies, was astonishing to her in its ferocity—a ferocity that could make sane men drag a boy alive at a horse's heels, turn father against son, brother against brother.

She thought long thoughts as she plied her delicate threads, while the stupendous import of the descending shadows appalled her.

She wondered if those who were beginning

to stand out upon its sombre background like points of light—namely, Mr. Washington, Mr. Jefferson, and all those grave men with them—could be as black as they were painted. They were gentlemen all, and of irreproachable character. It put a vague and piteous ache in her heart to think of them as traitors —an awful word! Yet that was what she heard on every side.

And that outstanding and romantic figure —the man in the worn buckskins, whose deep eyes seemed to see visions, and whose silver tongue was already the most feared force in the land—what of him? This man who fought for innocence, who dared to ride into the Governor's dooryard and demand justice at the rifle's mouth—could it be possible he was as vile as they pictured him?

An unconscious sigh lifted the filmy kerchief on her maiden breast and she bent her brown head over her frame. Patience Conwell, attending some small work of tidying the rustic chairs and table that she might be near

her mistress, turned adoring eyes that way.

"You are sad, Mistress?" she asked anxiously, with that boldness which had come with the open favor of the gentlewoman to whom she belonged.

Penelope raised her hazel eyes and looked at her.

"Yes," she said, "I think I am. A sadness runs through the days like a thread in tapestry—appearing, lost, and lost again, but ever there. I grieve for what is yet to come."

The lass from Lancashire came and stood across the table, the sunlight falling, through the empty grape-vines, upon her handsome head.

"I also," she said, " I fear me at nights and seem to see great things a-borning in the future. But oh! they are fine things, Mistress! Wondrous, proud things, that have to do with blood and fire and the souls of men! Proud, proud things!"

Penelope's lips fell a bit apart and her eyes became round with wonder.

"Why, Patience!" she said, aghast, "you speak as with a prophecy!"

But at that moment a servant brought Lord Lester to the garden and the girl went quietly away.

The young man was beginning to come more and more often to the sunny garden behind the long log house. He seemed to find in its cool-aired peace a comfort and a solace for the melancholy that was ever with him. Now he dropped his long length into a chintz-covered chair and watched Penelope's white fingers, which took up their light task after greeting him. They were lovely fingers, long and slim and satin-soft, for they toiled not, neither did they spin. And they were capable of enchanting a man's eyes—as they did more than once.

Now the young nobleman sighed and let his blue glance rest upon them for so long in silence that the girl rallied him upon his dolor.

"What troubles you, my lord?" she asked. "Are you, too, seeing visions—the dark visions

that sadden the rest of us? My serving-maid hath turned prophetess and I hardly know my own soul when I look into it."

"Nay, Mistress Pen," he answered, "I borrow no trouble there, for already I have settled in my own mind where I shall be when the storm breaks. I give it no further thought. But a sadness of which I do not speak," he finished, with simple dignity, "eats at my heart, my friend."

The girl stopped her threading and regarded him with quick sympathy.

"Why, my lord!" she said, "I had not dreamed that you suffered from a love! It cannot be Sheila nor any of the Carroll girls, neither that madcap, Phenie La Porte?"

"None. But only a simple maiden of the wilderness, whose straight young mind cannot be won by gold nor station—and for whose sake I would gladly give my all."

He sighed and looked away, and Penelope laid her soft hand gently upon his, which were clasped and hanging between his satin-cov-

ered knees where golden buckles sparkled.

"I am so sorry," she said.

Lord Lester held the hand and folded it in both his own.

"Ah well," he said, smiling, "let us talk of other things. The slow waters of the James are lovely now with the breath of fall upon their silver surface. Would you care to ride there some afternoon? I know a man who hath a tidy boat, cushioned and light upon its little keel. It would greatly pleasure me to row you, an you can find the time and the desire to go."

"Gladly! The parties are no more and there is so little of joyousness left. I'll wear my purple poplin and we'll forget the shadows that trouble us both, my lord, for a little space."

She rose with him and passed to the gateway that gave upon the street. As she stood in its unbarred opening, a picture in her brocade gown, there came, riding in from the turnpike, a young woman on a sedate white

horse. Her long skirt swept down to the animal's decrepit knees, her spirited face was glowing in the rim of her bonnet, pushed a bit back upon her dusky head.

At the tautening of the young man's form beside her—the instinctive betrayal—Penelope knew instantly that she beheld the "simple maiden of the wilderness."

And it was none other than Doxey Fairweather, come to the town on some errand of her father's business. At Lord Lester's quick salute she bowed from her side-saddle and flashed him a smile.

Penelope was not to forget that face with its fire and flame, for she was to see it once in candle-light when a man's life hung in the balance and her own heart faltered in her breast.

FAIR FRIENDS AT COURT

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CHAPTER IX

FAIR FRIENDS AT COURT

OF the dreary winter that soon shut down upon the land the less said the better. Almost all social life was dead. The towns were sharply split in two. Suspicion sat upon every shoulder and coldness covered the volcanic fires that slept beneath the surface.

And so we come, along with those who love in this little handful of people, to the early months of a year that was to be momentous above all other years since that one when two weary travelers slept in a wayside stable over whose humble roof a great star came and stood. In that other year, so long ago, the Hope of the World was born. In this one was to be born its Liberty.

The land bent under a weeping sky, for there was much rain.

The Patriots, for such they called themselves, were organized. They were drilled and armed and—waiting. The powder was laid, needing but the torch.

The crux of the matter was reached, the whole plan of rebellion formed, the structure all but finished. It needed but the last touch of fire to weld it solidly together, to make of the seething mass of wronged and indignant Colonists a force that would go smashing forth to fight for liberty and the future.

And this last moment was already winging swift toward them in Richmond, where such men as Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Lee were working earnestly toward the culmination. This culmination was a gigantic meeting to be held openly in utter defiance of the King's orders, and word of which was running through the country like little tongues of flame.

Just when it would be called was a matter which troubled the government, and which His Excellency would have given much to know.

"I tell you the cord of royal patience is

strained, gentlemen!" said Governor Dunmore. "The rebels have gone too far! It will call for war an they do not retrench, and that right hurriedly. His Majesty's commands are stern, giving full right of military force to be applied. The devil's scum know that King George is harried at home with his own political troubles, else they would not dare to beard the lion thus."

"Did I not this thing foretell, your Excellency, long back, when I advised the capture of that threadbare firebrand who hath ridden the countryside like a veritable Tam o'Shanter, with the witch of treason at his horse's tail?" asked von Kneibling, sharply.

"Aye," returned His Excellency, "but I dared not seize him for 'twould have fired the fabric then; and God knows we were not ready. Neither are we now. For though our soldiery are eager for battle-smoke, yet they are all too few, and His Majesty hath not as yet sent over the new men I have been asking for with every ship."

"Strong measures, your Excellency," returned the German, "are the right ones always. This man hath been abroad too long already."

"If I might make so bold, sir," said the elder Mr. Randolph, "I believe our friend speaks the truth. This eager-eyed woodsman has done more to stir up this hornet's nest than any other in Virginia. Why, his fiery words have traveled north and south and west until they have become catch-words for the rebels, so I hear on good authority."

And His Excellency gazed out the window, frowning at the memory of his good horse shot in the dust of the road, himself looking down the muzzle of a traveling gun.

He drummed on the table with his stout fingers, and a grim determination crystallized within him.

"Gentlemen," he said, stirring, "I believe you are right. We must be ready now, willy-nilly. The taking of this man will ring the bell, I feel sure, bring down upon the loyalists

nothing less than—war. But—we will be ready."

"Goot!" cried von Kneibling, springing to his feet, his small eyes sparkling. "And I, too, your Excellency, shall be ready—to ride again. And this time there shall be no stopping! I'll drag him to death!"

At the back of the long room there was a scarce perceptible shadow as some one moved across the opening of a door, and presently Patience Conwell joined her mistress where she sat in her own room broidering, as was her wont. At the look on the girl's face Penelope started and held her needle still.

"What ghost have you seen, Patience?" she asked. "Your eyes are wide as saucers and I do avow your cheeks have lost their color!"

"Mistress," said Patience, straightly, "I know not how your heart lies in this matter of the rebellion, but in the case of a man—one man, Mistress, that we both know for good and gallant—it can but ache with mine when I tell you that I overheard but now a plot to

drag him at a horse's heels, with von Kneibling in the saddle—*and there is no stopping planned! To drag him to his death!*"

For a long moment Penelope stared at her serving-maid as one who does not credit his ears. Then:

"This man—Patience," she said, almost whispering—"this—man—?"

"Is Patrick Henry, the blue-eyed knight who fights for the helpless, our gallant friend, Sir Buckskins. And I for one," she finished, with a flash of the spirit which had ever lain dormant in her face, "would give my life to save him, since he once saved more than life for me."

But Penelope Dunmore put up a small hand and rubbed her white throat, where the breath seemed all but stopping.

" 'Tis that fiend, von Kneibling, has plotted this," she said, "and my father listens—as do all the rest. Doth any know you overheard?"

"None."

"Then," said Mistress Penelope, decidedly,

"you may have duties near the council-room whenever you deem it worth while—and tell me all you learn."

Patience Conwell bent quickly and kissed the shoulder under the white kerchief.

"Hearts," she said, "are sometimes more cunning than heads, and they belong to women. Sir Buckskins hath two friends at court, hath he not, my Mistress?"

"Aye," answered Penelope, as she bent to her broideries once more.

It was not so long after that when Patrick Henry, riding far from Jamestown, received by messenger a little piece of paper, of a fine and delicate texture, such as came from overseas for use among the beaux and belles of Virginia. It was neatly shut and sealed with good red wax, and there was in the seal the print of a woman's thumb—a tiny thumb, shapely and fine-grained. The thing breathed of the aristocracy in every essential. Inside it bore, in prim, tall writing, an earnest, friendly warning, and it was not signed, save for the

small thumb-print again, dipped this time lightly in the ink.

"Our friend," it said, "we do earnestly advise that you come not near to Jamestown, and that you do take all precaution to guard your body from attack, for there are those in high places who would take and hold you—and do worse than that—to still your fiery tongue."

On that wind-blown day the woodsman sat long in his saddle, holding the little missive, and stared hard at the leafless forest. He would fain have questioned the messenger, but he, a serving-man of unfamiliar face, had gone away in haste after fulfilling this errand. So Patrick Henry could but study the prim script and wonder, though he took its warning seriously and bestowed the paper in his breast for safe-keeping.

Many times, in the days that followed, he wondered if perchance Doxey Fairweather, relenting, had sent it to him, but each time could not believe. There was too much against such belief. The girl's firm antagonism toward

him, for one thing; the missive's touch of fineness, its look of opulence, for another.

But soon events began to move swiftly and he forgot the matter, in his eagerness. Word of the vital meeting to be held at Richmond came to him far up along the James, and he came hurrying back as fast as his good roan horse could bring him, for his friends had settled on a date at last. This would be a pregnant time, a day of white faces and tense nerves, and the humble patriot felt in his secret soul a prescience of its need of him—as if the strong young country, heaving in its travail, sent out to him a tragic and holy call for help.

As he rode down the reaches of the dripping land that wet and early spring, his lean face was rapt with its high visions. For once he was deaf to bird-call and to river-voice.

He traveled carefully, always mindful of that warning hidden in his breast, for he knew the timbre of those who would "take and hold him."

A little later he met in secret, in the heart of Jamestown, Mr. Washington, Mr. Jefferson, and many others, all gathered behind drawn blinds, around dimly-lighted tables, where history was being made by their earnest talk.

He saw new faces, one of these being that of Harry Corton, who sat with young Tim Lovelace. Both of these young men were pale with the magnitude of the great plans they were hearing made.

" 'Tis good to see you, Patrick," said Mr. Jefferson, holding his hand affectionately upon their greeting. "I had feared we might not find you in your wide activities, and God knows we shall have need of you at Richmond."

"I was two hundred miles away," said Henry, "and Roanie has had hard going for many weeks, but we made it through as though we rode for gold—as indeed we did—and more than gold!"

Then the man, still clad in his forest garb, tall and spare and eager, was drawn forward

to the circle under the candles' flare, listening as if his life hung on every word.

Ah! what plans they were, a-borning there in that humble room!

What Torch of the World leaned in those steady hands toward the deathless light of Liberty to catch its fire!

It was near dawn when the candles were snuffed and those men filed out under the stars to part in silence with a grip of hands and a Godspeed. Harry Corton and Timothy Lovelace went away together, and Mr. Jefferson walked with Patrick Henry to the town's edge, to see him mount and ride away into the still shadows.

"Four more days," he whispered, as they shook hands at parting, "and if ever you besought your Maker, Patrick, do so now upon your bended knees, that you may speak that day with tongues of men and angels, for if ever the Cause will need you in this world it will be then."

"Amen!" said Patrick Henry, softly.

WHEN LOVE BETRAYS ITS OWN

CHAPTER X

WHEN LOVE BETRAYS ITS OWN

HERR VON KNEIBLING, stamping in from the wet outside, shook his heavy shoulders and muttered an imprecation as he ordered fire in a private room and ale for six, of Master Fairweather.

Of late the Cock's Feather Inn had been a favorite meeting place for staunch loyalists, since all knew the passionate partisanship of Master Fairweather and his daughter. Plans might be made there with no fear of a leakage —which, alas! seemed not the case with His Excellency's own household—and the Inn itself was so far in the forest that strangers were rare at this time of the year.

John Fairweather bustled about attending his duties, and soon other gentlemen arrived out of the mist of rain to foregather in the in-

ner room. There was the Governor himself, and Mr. Merwin, and that hot champion of His Majesty, Mr. Bainridge, along with several others whom Doxey, bringing her famous cakes, did not recognize. One of these, an officer by his uniform and smart carriage, favored the girl with a leer and a wink, and as she passed attempted to chuck her under the chin.

"Sir," said Doxey sharply, "until I so comport as to give you leave, your hands to yourself!"

At which the officer stared and von Kneibling laughed uproariously.

Then they fell to low-voiced talk and the girl, frowning, went to the outer room, where she looked from the mullioned window toward the dripping forest. She must be near to wait upon them, but did not wish to linger. And so, half dreaming, after the fashion of maids, she lost the import of the voices, hearing only the low hum.

She was thinking of Lord Lester, so hand-

some in his rich apparel, and wondering why she must say him nay—why the glamor of his wealth and station could not sway her heart. Not a maid in Virginia but would have looked tenderly upon him, of that she felt sure. And yet, she saw upon the curtain of her mind a tall figure in fringed buckskins whose deep eyes spoke a wondrous language and whose mobile lips shook at times with tenderness. At that unbidden picture she frowned and laid her capable hands, clenched to a truculent fist, upon the ledge before her.

"A traitor!" she told herself. "An enemy to my King!"

And even as the words formed themselves in her mind there broke in upon her reverie the name of the man himself.

"This maker of speeches," von Kneibling was saying, "this arch-rebel, this one who calls himself Patrick Henry—without him would the other rebels falter. He it is who fires them all—*verdampt!* If this man, mine friends, gets to that meeting which will be in

Richmond held—and soon, we believe—he will lose the Crown its cause, so help me Gott!"

There was a murmur of assent from the rest and von Kneibling went on:

"He must be kept from Richmond, gentlemen, at any cost—by any means."

For one second the dim outline of the misty forest wavered before the eyes of the girl, listening now with every sense acute.

Lose the Crown its cause!

This man with his fatal gift of speech; this man who had all but drawn her upon his breast with the tones of his voice alone; this fire-brand—yes, he was to enter that mighty meeting where the struggle would be open at last . . . ah! what would he not do, with the tow of rebellion already laid for the lighting!

Doxey felt the sweat break in the palms of her hands and on her forehead where the dark curls lay. Fierce anger rose in her, flooding to every corner of her being. She hated him suddenly, with that bitter hatred which makes men plunge into battle with a shout. She

felt as if she could strike him dead with her own clenched hand, that this reptile of rebellion, lifting its head in her King's own Colonies, might be destroyed.

Long after the gentlemen were gone from that inner room the girl suffered with the new knowledge she had gained. It had not seemed possible before that there could be real danger in these muttering throngs.

Now she saw clearly and suddenly what His Excellency and those with him had seen for many months, namely, the size and density of the descending cloud.

Doxey Fairweather hated herself that she had not been born a man, to shoulder arms and fling herself into the conflict. So she tossed on her bed, while the soft rain fell on the inn's roof, and beat her brain for a thought of something she might do to serve her King—e'en though a woman's part in the coming struggle.

While the slow hours dragged she sat among her patchwork quilts, her knees clasped in her embrace, and thought long thoughts that were

sullen with this hatred. And then, just as a cock in the stables behind the inn crew for the early day, her eyes grew round with the magnitude of some inner revelation. Her lips fell helplessly apart. *Doxey Fairweather had found her King's command!*

Destiny, it seemed, was bent on favoring Patrick Henry with missives.

Forty-eight hours before that vital one set to strike in Richmond, he sat alone before his humble hearth deep in the forest that he loved, his head bowed in his clasped hands. For the man was modest in his glowing zeal, and his soul besought its Maker for light, as Mr. Jefferson had so earnestly advised.

All his body was strung to trembling pitch, like a singing wire, for he saw the flaming future and his own part in it. If only he might be worthy, prayed Patrick Henry—might ever so slightly help to turn the risen tide!

And then, while the rain dripped from the eaves and Roanie munched his provender in the shed at the cabin's side—for Patrick must

needs have his best friend always near—there came a hail from the dark without, and a man sat there, himself and his horse glistening in the light that danced from the hearth through the opened door. He was a servant, by his mien and garb, but one whom Patrick did not know.

"Will you light, friend?" he asked the woodsman.

But the other shook his head and handed him a letter.

This was no delicate bit of cobweb like that one which met him far up the James, but a plain and sensible looking communication. So he took it near the hearth to read.

This is what he saw, written in a round feminine hand, painstakingly crossed and dotted:

To Patrick Henry, sometime frequenter of the Cock's Feather Inn.

Sir:

Once, upon a night in spring, you said to me, "If ever I can serve you, call, and I shall come." I

call you now—on vital business. This very night I shall be in Jamestown, at the house of Mr. Merwin (who hath befriended my father on a time), and would fain see and speak with you. An you are true to that promise—come.

Your obedient servant,
DOXEY FAIRWEATHER.

The man by the hearth straightened to his tall height, and the flames themselves were no more clear and shining than his blue eyes. A little smile curled up the corners of his mouth, the hand that held that first missive trembling slightly. He turned to bespeak the messenger without and bid him in for a cup of wine to hearten him, as one man to another, but the glistening horse and its rider were gone, disappeared into the dripping night which had given them up.

So Patrick Henry, the patriot—called by another name, and with a price upon his head in Jamestown—set himself to redeem that old promise with faithful promptness. He took down his jacket from its peg, shook it

with almost timid care and straightened out its ragged fringe.

It had gone shabby, in all truth, in the months when he had ridden the byways, for he had forgot to have the old Indian, who ever kept him supplied, to tan his skins for a new one. Now he regretted his negligence. However, it must serve. So he put it on, swung a belt about his loins to hold the knife that went always where he did, tightened the thongs at his knees, set his fur cap on his head, took his rifle and stepped out to saddle Roanie.

What high hope was in his heart, who can say? What visions of hardly-hoped-for joy? If he saw an humble hearth in a free future and a woman's dark head shining in its light—perhaps above a cradle—who could blame him? Love was with him—had been with him for the whole long year since he had stolen to the Inn's door to listen to a maiden's voice singing in the shadows.

He smiled now as he rode in the rain, his

long legs swinging in the stirrups, his hands crossed on his saddle-bow, thinking of that spirited face turned to Lord Lester in angry indignation, of the sharp young voice saying defiantly: "I am not so high-and-mighty, being only an innkeeper's daughter, therefore privileged to be kind"—and of the haunting strain of "The Rose and Thorn." Ah! could he ever forget that melody?

This one woman, of all the world, had taken his heart by storm; this one slim girl, keen, spirited, brave, whose favor could not be bought by rank or station, whose beauty was so rare and glowing, whose deep kindness was a byword among the frequenters of her father's inn.

Ah! thought Patrick Henry, riding in the night at her first call, this was the woman by-ordinary in whom he had believed—must always believe!

At that house of Mr. Merwin, situate a little way down the main road from the Governor's, of which the missive spoke, Doxey Fair-

weather stood in her hooded cape and spoke earnestly with a group of men.

She breathed fast, for she, too, had ridden in the night, and on her round cheeks the rain drops glistened like pearls on parchment, for all the color was gone from her face. Only her eyes glowed with it—great dark eyes that sparkled and dulled and sparkled again as the light from the candles struck across them.

The gentlemen, most of them summoned hastily by the barrister at the girl's request, regarded her wonderingly. There was His Excellency, none too well pleased to be disturbed at a rubber of cards, and von Kneibling and the strange man in the uniform who had been with them at the inn, along with Lord Lester, brought from watching Mistress Penelope at her endless broideries, since, for some occult reason, he had desired to come. Now he looked at Doxey, with sick longing, standing back, as was his courteous habit.

"Sirs," said Doxey, trembling a little, "as you all know, I am a loyalist."

"None better, my girl," said the Governor, kindly.

"And we all know that Virginia hath need of her true hearts, that His Majesty's cause is in grave danger—is it not so?"

"Aye—would God it were not!" answered His Excellency.

"Then it is the bounden duty of each loyal heart to do what he can for the Cause—and I —I believe—" the steady young voice shook a trifle—"that I may serve."

She wet her lips, which seemed suddenly gone dry, and the gentlemen waited.

"When last you conferred at my father's inn, sirs, I, waiting your need of wine and cakes in the outer room, did hear, half consciously, your speech concerning one Patrick Henry, and how great a danger he is to us. You spoke of that meeting in Richmond, and that he must not attend. Have you laid plans to prevent him—if I might ask?"

"Plans!" cried the Governor. "Yes, plans! But that is all. We have had our minions

scouring every byroad and lane for six days in the hope of capturing him, but the man's an eel—a wisp of smoke! No one knows where he is or has been—or is likely to be! And I say again, Mistress, if Patrick Henry gets to that meeting it means war for the Colonies. Sedition will rise like the James in freshet—and none may know the result. I'd give a chest of gold to have him in my hands this night!"

Again the girl wet her lips. Her fingers shook a trifle on her cape's edge.

"Then, sir," she said, "an you will give me safe conduct for him if I win him as I wish, I think I can keep him from that meeting. You grant me it?"

"With all my heart, Mistress!" cried the Governor fervently.

Doxey turned to Mr. Merwin.

"I think Patrick Henry will be here within the hour. An you will conduct him to a private room, not knowing we are here, and take me to him, I will thank you."

"'Odsblood!" cried His Excellency in amazement. "How found you him? How did you effect this thing?"

"I know a-many things, sir," said Doxey, gravely, "and from many sources. I had rather not say."

Mr. Merwin left the room with alacrity, and a strained silence fell. Doxey sat in the chair which Lord Lester placed for her, and she seemed fascinated by the candles that burned in sconces on the walls, for her dark eyes were fixed upon them steadily.

The soft sound of the dripping eaves became loud in the stillness and Lord Lester watched the girl with mingled emotions. After a long time there came from the outer street the sound of a horse's hoofs that went carefully, as if its rider were alert, and stopped before the house. They heard the door and the barrister's voice—for he had been on watch himself—and the silence grew deep again.

Presently Mr. Merwin returned, grave and quiet.

"Mistress," he said, "he awaits you."

Then, in all truth, did Doxey Fairweather tremble as she rose, so that she could scarcely stand, and she turned wide-eyed toward His Excellency.

"Sir," she said, " I beg that you will wait here—for—for if—I fail—"

She did not finish, but turned and followed Mr. Merwin.

The barrister led her through a door and down a short hall, where one dim candle burned in its high sconce, to another door beyond.

This he opened, bowed, stepped back and closed it behind her.

The girl stood still against it for a moment with one hand at her heart, her great eyes, like troubled pools, fixed on the man who stood there in his clinging buckskins sparkling with the beaded rain.

"Mistress," said Patrick Henry, "you called—and I am here."

The deep blue eyes, beneath their oddly turned-up lashes, shone with the joy that drew the stern mouth into the smile he could not hide.

He came toward her with both hands held out, shaking a trifle in their eagerness, and involuntarily she laid her own in them.

The man clasped them hard and, drawing them swiftly up, laid them, palms down, against his breast. He leaned down and smiled into her eyes and, against her will, she felt her senses swim. Then, as if a light touch swept a harp, the softest voice she had ever heard said:

"Doxey! Oh! my light on dark waters—my warmth in the cold—heart of my soul—I love you!"

And the next second he had swept her in upon his breast and pressed his lips upon her lips in such a kiss as sent her sinking in a sea of ecstasy. A marvelous caress, firm enough

to be ardent with the fire that was in him, yet so soft and sweet with tenderness that it must have won the most timid. Flaming from brow to throat, the girl tore herself away and faced him, panting with emotion.

"Sir!" she said, desperately, " I came here —and brought you—of a set purpose! These are tense times and we act with sharpness. Tell me again—you love me?"

Patrick Henry, shaken to the depths, but still and quiet in his self-control, bowed gravely.

"To the foundation of my being," he said, simply, "in every nerve and fibre—you and you only—and shall—to world's end."

"Then," said Doxey, wetting her lips, "what would do you for me?"

"Anything—almost."

"To have me to wife—what?"

"Lord!" said Patrick Henry. And the hand that lay uppermost on his folded arms shut and opened once.

"What?" probed the girl.

"What would you?" he asked.

Down from the vanished ages came Delilah and spread her guileful spirit all through the good heart of Doxey Fairweather, so that, for sake of the liege she had never seen, she went to this lean backwoodsman and laid betraying fingers on his arm.

"Stay away from that meeting in Richmond!" she said. "And for this you shall marry me and—I will be your true and faithful wife all the days of my life."

Alas! for the splendid kiss, for the lofty dreams, for the vision of a bent black head above a rocking cradle!

Patrick Henry's face quivered, as if she had struck him. The shining blue eyes dulled, the lids closed tightly over them as if in an effort to keep back springing tears—which was indeed the case. For something that was not sparkling rain stole down along the lean cheek and it, too, sparkled in the candlelight.

The hands on the folded arms slid loosely

down, the fingers of one fiddling with the old fur cap they held.

For one long moment he stood so, still as death.

Then he drew a deep breath, raised his glance and looked at her, and all the tears were burned from his eyes in the mounting fire that filled them.

He seemed to dilate, to be taller, more gaunt and graceful than she had ever seen him. Along his right cheek a muscle twitched.

"It was for this, then," he said, thickly, "that I have dreamed dreams and heard melodies! For this my heart melted in the fire of your beauty! For this have you called, and I answered! To make of me that poorest of all things, the most despised—a traitor! You thought so poorly of me, then, Mistress?"

"I thought you loved me," said Doxey, with consummate guile.

Patrick Henry raised a hand and dropped it—a piteous motion of resignation.

"Woman," he said, "an I lay in your arms

this moment, which great blessing I have not dared ask of Heaven, I should fling you aside like a garment, did you attempt to hold me when that sharp summons came! You—and my only friend, the big roan horse without—and my life—these do I fling in the balance for my country's sake! They are my only precious things—they are my sacrifice—less than nothing, in my country's need! I give you good night and—goodbye."

He bowed so low before her that the shabby fur cap swept the floor in his hand's broad sweep, then straightened to his full height.

"You—" said Doxey, faintly, "you—refuse me?"

"Without a second's hesitation, and with finality," he said.

For a moment the girl regarded him with wide eyes, her lips parted, as if her breath came with difficulty. There was a vast weakness in her limbs, yet desperate courage in her heart. She was of the stuff of martyrs,

this sweet woman who thought she was on the rack of right.

Then, as the man moved toward the door to hold it for her, she flashed before him, sprang through, drew the door shut and—dropped into its slot the bar that crossed it!

Patrick Henry, the lighter of flames, the friend of liberty, arch-enemy of the Crown, was a prisoner!

Doxey Fairweather darted across the dim hall and, flinging open the door to that other room, stood in the entrance. Her face was white as wax, her lips ashen, her hand was at her breast.

"Gentlemen," she cried, "he is there—go take him!"

There was an exclamation from von Kneibling, a guttural word spoken in his own tongue, and the gentlemen pushed through in eagerness. The girl stared at the candles once more, and she did not hear the sharply drawn breath of another woman in the shadows near Lord Lester. Mistress Penelope Dunmore

had come hurriedly through the night. The passionate whisper of her serving-maid had told her a roan horse had passed through the faint light of the postlanthorn in the street.

Presently the principal actors in this small drama of love and war stood together in Mr. Merwin's house, while the rain dripped without—as if Virginia wept—for they brought Patrick Henry to stand in his shabby clothes and face them.

As he came through the door his eyes went helplessly to the girl in the hooded cape who had betrayed him, and they were eloquent. Deep eyes alight with flame, their lashes turned up around the lids with a certain boyish beauty, and they spoke with a thousand tongues. An odd silence fell upon the room, as if all but the prisoner were painfully embarrassed.

Lord Lester and Penelope each was passing through a strange experience, for each was reading another's face; the nobleman, that of the tavern-keeper's daughter; the maid, that

of the patriot—and each saw there the print of love.

His Excellency spoke a few sharp words, at which von Kneibling and the young officer stepped forward and laid hand on the prisoner's arms.

"That," said the latter, gently, "is not necessary."

"But pleasant," said the German, "mine friendt, very pleasant."

"Perhaps," returned Henry. "But a cheap triumph, since you must needs take me from a woman's hand."

At that there was a little sound, scarce audible, as if one caught in her breath and let it out sharply.

Once again the man looked at the girl in the hooded cape.

"Mistress," he said, "though you have me shot tomorrow—as no doubt you will—you are still my woman by-ordinary. I must still believe."

"No!" cried out Doxey, suddenly, "say not

so! I—I cannot bear it! And I have His Excellency's word for safe conduct—"

"No," cut in the Governor, sharply, "only in case you 'won him as you wished.' There was no mention made an you should fail."

"You—mean—" gasped the girl.

"That this man—a traitor to his king—is now our prisoner, and must pay the price of treachery!"

"And as example to other traitors," grinned von Kneibling. "And this time there will be no stopping at a rifle's mouth."

"Lord God!" whispered Penelope, white lipped, though none heard save Lord Lester, who stood beside her, and who reached a kindly hand to touch her fingers, working in her kirtle's folds.

But Doxey Fairweather groped blindly for the chair's back and, fastening her hands upon it, turned great scared eyes from one face to another.

"Not—safe—conduct, sirs?" she said, stupidly.

"None."

"Then—what have I done!" she whispered, as if to herself—"what have I done!"

But already the group of gentlemen, close-packed about the tall figure in their midst, was moving from the room. At the threshold the prisoner turned and looked back with troubled eyes.

"For myself," he said, "I ask no clemency, but there is one that I would bid some one to take and keep, an any here is so minded—the good roan horse, that waits for me without. Gentlemen, can I commend him to your mercy? He is a good, faithful horse."

"Ja," said von Kneibling quickly, "have no fear. He will be most meticulously kept—against that other ride which I have pledged to take through the streets of Jamestown with another traitor at his heels."

But from the farther side of the dim room a soft voice spoke with a smooth and gentle accent.

"Friend," said Lord Lester, "I accept your

charge. The roan horse will be waiting when perchance Virginia's difficulties shall be smoothed away and all these sorry clouds are vanished."

Patrick Henry, from his tall height, flashed the nobleman a smile across the other's heads.

"Thanks, friend," he said.

A WOMAN'S KISS

CHAPTER XI

A WOMAN'S KISS

THE New World lay trembling—holding its breath. Men with pale faces and grim lips were traveling its muddy roads from all directions, going toward Richmond.

The dreary rain continued to fall, intensifying the silence of the forests that marched ever along the highways of the young land.

Couriers galloped this way and that with messages. Some of them were on the King's business and went in freedom, while others were stopped by the soldiery. But many went in secret, and the muttering of the throngs had stilled to quiet—that pregnant quiet which precedes action.

On the eve of this fateful meeting the Governor had sent a call to all loyalists to go to Richmond. If they could not prevent the

rebels gathering, they might, by overwhelming numbers, stampede them with flamboyant loyalty.

Boston and Philadelphia were seething with their own trouble. Jamestown, famous for its legal heads, its influence, must go in force. So there was gathering of groups in the lamp-light in the misty streets, stamping of horses where coaches glistened in the rain, and hurried speech of men in long coats who made ready for a desperate journey.

Before the house of the Governor stood the best equipage the town afforded, a splendid coach, strong and well curtained, drawn by the best stock to be had in Jamestown. In this was to go His Excellency himself, along with his chosen few—Mr. Merwin, Mr. Randolph, (both of whom were noted orators), von Kneibling and the man in uniform. Other coaches waited, and other gentlemen pulled on gloves, kissed their ladies and opened the gates to their gardens, passing out on this most fateful business. There were old men and mid-

dle-aged, and some of the macaronies who had been wont a year ago to spend their time at the Cock's Feather Inn over the cards and John Fairweather's ale, though now their gaiety was gone. Jack Frisbee and the younger Randolphs were all that were left of the roystering group that used to ride the turnpike, and they stood together in bitter loyalty; for Timothy Lovelace and Harry Corton were openly following Thomas Jefferson and Mr. Washington, while Lord Lester stood aside, uncommunicative, watching both sides with grave and quiet eyes.

Penelope Dunmore, her sweet face somewhat pinched in the dimpled cheeks, her hazel eyes dark with some inner excitement, submitted to her father's hasty peck upon her forehead, gave her hand to Mr. Merwin, bowed to the rest—and failed to see von Kneibling's outstretched hand.

Not once, in the hours that had elapsed since the tragic happening at the barrister's house, had she been able to forget the Ger-

man's evil smile or his covert threat concerning that awful ride. She seemed to see again and again a bundle bouncing at a horse's heels—and this time worn buckskins fluttering their fringes in the dust, a blond head rolled limply. She shuddered, as if with a little chill, and drew her kerchief close to her white throat.

Then the coach door slammed, the black driver mounted the box, the young horses sprang away, other coaches started down the street, and the pick of Jamestown was on its way to save the day for King George III.

And in a windowless room underground, scarce an hundred paces from the window where she stood, Patrick Henry sat on a rude bed with his head in his hands and black despair in his heart. Be it said to his honor that no thought of his sorrow and loss intruded, but that all the pain that racked him had its source in his country's peril and his own failure to aid her in her dark hour.

He covered his face with his hands, and slow tears dripped between the trembling fingers. They were bitter drops, vital as blood from the patriot heart beneath. . . . A soldier in the King's colors paced the stone-flagged passageway without the door, his steps regular as the swinging of a pendulum. And Patrick Henry wept as slowly and drearily as the weeping eaves outside. . . .

All through the long night Mistress Penelope Dunmore walked in her tiring-room, a warm scarf drawn about her shoulders, her hair still coifed and powdered, her bodice laced and her wide skirt swinging as she walked. There was a piteous expression in her soft sweet eyes, a trembling in her lips.

Patience Conwell stood quietly by the closed door or replenished the fire on the hearth, seeing to all for her mistress' comfort, and from time to time came and walked beside her, her arm about the more delicate shoulders in that passionate adoration which

characterized all her service. Once she touched the white fingers that played ceaselessly with the kerchief's ruffle, and they were cold as death.

When the grey dawn came creeping under the greyer clouds the girl lay down in her high bed, dressed as she was, and slept, though Patience entreated to be allowed to undress her.

"It seems I can take no peace, ever again," said Penelope, dully, "what with the darkness of the year—and the loss of Sheila and Euphenie—and now this—this—"

She did not finish for the catching in her throat, but fell into weary slumber with the tremble still in her lips and the white fingers twitching in their sleep. It was almost night again when she awoke. Patience Conwell bent above her with a cup of steaming broth.

"Drink, Mistress," she begged. "It will break my heart an you do not. There are dark rings beneath your eyes."

But Penelope pushed it away, and at the

shaking of her head the long curl bobbed wistfully on her shoulder.

"I cannot," she said.

Then it was that the serving-maid showed the quality of her mind and heart, for she bent low and, with her rosy lips at her mistress' ear, whispered:

"There is, as sentry in the stone passageway below, a big soldier with covetous eyes and full lips—a youth of bounding blood. I think—if one offered him, perhaps, a kiss—some one like—like me, you know, Mistress, he might be persuaded to— Sir Buckskins hath a pretty way in battle, as none knows better than I. And a kiss to a soldier were small coin to pay for the great debt I owe him. Will you drink now, Mistress?"

Ah! what magic was in the subtle words!

Mistress Penelope reached for the cup and drained it eagerly.

"How near is the night?" she whispered, looking toward the window. And Patience whispered back, " 'Tis almost here."

Pace—pace—pace, turn and pace. Pace—pace—turn again.

The soldier in the passage went to the far end, where a door led out beyond a flight of stairs, and, turning methodically, came back along the narrow way, his gun upon his shoulder. He was a handsome youth, of a broad make, with the neck of a bull set on powerful shoulders, and bold blue eyes that wandered. His tall cap towered above him and his gay coat was bright with its crossed straps and buttons. His boots shone in the dim light of the lanthorn that swung from the rafters.

The door to that solitary underground room was barred and locked, the clumsy key standing in its lock. In the door itself was a small opening, criss-crossed with stout iron lattices. There was no light within the room itself. The prisoner needed none. It seemed to him, in his thwarted zeal, that if he could not see the light of liberty he cared never to see another. He had not slept a minute in the

twenty hours since he had felt the rumble in the earthen walls that marked the going of that coach and four. He had sat in a dull lethargy of despair, or paced the narrow space like a caged lion, biting at his finger-nails.

So the sentry paid him small heed, pacing in his tireless walk.

But presently, in the cold silence, there came a sound, a little soft sound as of a light foot on the stone stairs, and the soldier snapped his gun around and cried a halt. Steady fingers were on the trigger. Death was in his face. But it gave way to pleased astonishment when he beheld in the lanthorn's light, first the hem of a broad brocaded kirtle, and then the handsome face of a girl who leaned down from the stairs and looked with smiling eyes along the passage.

"Good even, Sir Sentry," said Patience Conwell, archly.

Now the soldier was young and, as the girl had so shrewdly guessed, of a quick pulse and a daring spirit. His bold blue eyes lighted in-

stantly at sight of her beauty and he lowered his weapon.

"Good even, Mistress," he said, willingly.

She came down along the passage, stepping daintily and swinging her broad skirt with a subtle coquetry, and stood before the youth, smiling.

Patience Conwell had been good to look upon that long past day when she stood in fear and trembling upon the auction block, and the year's well-being had added to her grace. Her blue eyes were soft and bright, her fair hair, unpowdered, shone mistily under the light, and her inviting mouth was curved and red.

So it was small wonder that the young English soldier gazed at her with unconcealed pleasure. She stood primly upon her pretty feet and played with a ribband in the lacing of her bodice as if she were shy and diffident.

"To what good fortune, pretty," said the youth, boldly, "do I owe this kindly visit—I, in my lonely and thankless task?"

Patience dropped her glance and ceased her smiling.

"Why—I—" she said, and hesitated.

"Yes?"

"I am far from England, sir," she went on, "and lonely." (Here she mutely prayed forgiveness for the falsehood, for she owned a lively happiness in her beloved mistress' service.) "Is it any wonder that I, seeing you with your fellows in the Governor's yard and knowing you for a countryman, should desire to speak with you?"

"None. And I am glad of the desire, for this is lonely work."

So, for a little space, they spoke of that dear land across the sea, and Patience, in her seeming eagerness for its old news, came near and stood searching the soldier's face. And presently she answered once at random, as if, in gazing at him, she had forgot his words. At that, a gleam grew in the youth's bold eyes and he laid a light touch on her arm. She suffered it, though every instinct in her longed

to throw it off. And she seemed taken with a sudden embarrassment, so that she must make hurried speech to hide it.

"New at the game of love," thought the soldier, "but willing to learn."

"You—you do not fear the dark and the loneliness a-picketing your camp at night?" she asked.

"Fear! A soldier of His Majesty!" he exclaimed, laughing. "You do me scant honor, Mistress. I fear more such blue eyes as yours, for they are deadly weapons."

The girl dropped her head, and the bold hand crept up her arm.

She shifted on her feet a bit, so that she leaned with her back against the wall beside the door, and the youth leaned nearer, his other hand on the wall above her head, his gun resting on the floor beside him.

Her beauty shone in the dim light and set his breath a-flutter.

Covetousness was in his drowsy glance.

The girl's strong heart shook ever so slightly in its steady beat with a nameless fright.

As if to gain time before capitulation, she turned her eyes away and picked at the damp stones beside her.

"But what of the rebels?" she asked, "an they should come to rescue the prisoner?"

"We'll shoot them like dogs," he answered.

"This man you guard," said Patience, clearly, "this Patrick Henry, is a fighter himself, I hear. There is a story current of his once throwing into the River James a trader who whipped a maid, an indentured servant he had bought. He is quick to see—to understand—to act. I think, did he catch so much as a shadow of chance, he would seize it like a flash."

Inside the darkened room the man on the bed's edge raised his head from his hands. There was something in the tones of the voice that caught at his consciousness.

"I thank you for the warning, sweet," the

soldier said, "and like you the better for it. Have no fear. He is safe—and no rebels can gain entrance to the Governor's own house."

"But His Excellency is gone," said Patience, "and only the servants are in, beside the soldiers in the upper hall. To be sure," she went on, still in that odd, clear tone, "Lord Lester is with my mistress in the small reception room beside the entrance to the garden. He comes often. And I think this night he rode the prisoner's own horse, a big and powerful roan. 'Tis a pity he leaves it in the garden, for the mist is heavy."

From the bed's edge a tall form rose with the grace and silence of a panther and stepped to the door. The small blue eyes, burning now with sudden lambent flame, looked through the lattice and beheld the aureoled head of the girl, and the fatuous face the soldier bent toward her. With a great light breaking in upon him, Patrick Henry knew her for the lass from Lancashire whom he had led to the Governor's daughter that day in spring! She

was subtly telling him astounding things. . . . Lord Lester, who had called him "friend" in the room beside the garden entrance . . . and Roanie waiting in the night! Could it be coincidence?

He held his breath for the girl's next words.

The soldier was very close above her now. Henry could hear his breathing. The bold hand had reached her throat—was creeping around her neck.

"Sweet," he whispered, "one kiss—that red mouth—ah! be still—just one kiss!"

For Patience squirmed against the door, as if in an agony of embarrassment, one hand gripping his arm. Patrick could not see the other, but he, watching desperately, did see that her left shoulder slid down, as if that other hand were behind her back—reaching—reaching for something there. The man with the flaming eyes held his breath and listened, as we listen for the failing breath of one we love.

"Ah! well—" whispered the girl, "then—just—one—kiss!"

And as the soldier pressed his passionate mouth to hers the man in the cell behind, standing crouched and ready, heard what he was listening for—the click of the key in the lock!

In one lightning flash—before the astounded sentry could loose himself from the girl's sudden clutch, almost before the kiss was done—there was the surge and scramble of three bodies from the wide-flung door—and the lean man in the buckskins was upon him!

The young soldier was no weakling. Upon the instant they were in deadly combat, there in the deep silence of the stone passage, while the girl stood back, one hand upon her breast, the other pressed to her lips, warm from that false kiss.

Silent, straining, desperate, the two men went here and there, each striving for the other's throat, their feet slipping on the damp flags, their muscles cracking in the fury of the struggle.

HE HEARD WHAT HE WAS LISTENING FOR—THE CLICK OF THE KEY IN THE LOCK

They were evenly matched and bade fair to wear each other out.

Back and forth they went—now down upon the floor, again pressing each other against the wall, but neither giving sign of surrender.

Presently, the girl, watching her chance, came deftly in and wound her arms about the soldier's neck, hanging herself, a deadening weight, upon him. . . . A little time, a gallant, gallant effort of all that was in him—a pathetic storm of struggle against the double odds—and he went down upon the stones, with Patience Conwell's brilliant eyes turned up to Patrick Henry panting above them.

"Go!" she cried. "Go quickly—and God be with you, Sir Buckskins! I'll hold him here—or choke him to death with loving!"

But Patrick Henry hesitated.

"Why do you wait?" she cried. "The door yonder leads to the garden, and the sentry there is sodden with sack—sent and doctored with heavy liquor by my mistress' own hands."

"I cannot leave you—and him—thus," said Henry, thinking swiftly. "It would mean his death—and disaster to you—to whom I owe so much. I'll bind him fast and break the lock of the outer door. You can spread the tale that my friends overpowered the outside man, and, binding this man thus, did liberate me."

It took but scant time to tie the winded soldier, though he fought again. The girl's comely face grew red with the effort of helping hold him, and Patrick Henry, stopping a moment to press her hand, ran up the stairs to the outer door, broke its lock with a maul that lay near, pushed aside the drunken sentry, picked up his gun and plunged into the mist. He kept close to the log wall, reached the corner, looked around it into the dark garden, listened a moment, then crept like a cat to that side entrance of which the girl had spoken. In the deeper shadow of the hooded stoop he fancied he descried a figure. With infinite caution, he waited. Nothing moved

in the garden. And then, with some shift of the faint wet wind, knowledge of his presence was carried swiftly to one waiting also—Roanie safe hid beneath a hanging leafless vine—and with the unfathomed faithfulness of the dumb heart that blindly loves, the horse flung up his head and whinnied softly.

Patrick Henry sprang toward him, and the dim figure in the stoop came out. Two figures there were, for a woman followed the man. Lord Lester spoke guardedly.

"We wish you Godspeed, friend," he said.

The patriot turned and clasped his hand, wringing it hard.

"I have no words," he said simply. "In such a moment they are not needed."

To the girl beside the nobleman he bowed low.

"Dear lady," he whispered, "once I did kiss your hand in courtesy before a multitude. May I kiss it now in passionate gratitude and humble affection?"

He held out his hand and Mistress Penel-

ope laid her small cold fingers in it. At the touch of the man's lips, warm and firm and tremulous, she raised her other hand and covered her face, for tears were on her lashes and the sweet mouth was shaking piteously.

In another moment the lean figure had vaulted into the saddle, Lord Lester had opened the outer gate, there was a rataplan of hoofs upon the road—and Patrick Henry, twenty hours late, was gone upon his mission, riding desperately to his country's call!

The Lighter of Flames was loose in the night!

In the shadow of the stoop Lord Lester reached out tender arms, and Penelope, her hands still covering her face, went into them and leaned against his breast.

"Dear heart," said the young man, gently, "the bitter waters of unrequited love are near to swamping us both. Perhaps, an we swim together, we may win out to peaceful shores. Mayhap we may thank the fate that throws us together now in understanding. Will you

come with me, Penelope, that we may help each other to forget? Life is long before us. Let us travel it together toward a better day."

And for answer the weeping girl reached up a timid hand and laid it on his cheek.

An hour later Patience Conwell came by a roundabout way to her mistress' room. She had waited and crept, that none might observe her, for she had good reason that none should suspect her of being away from that quiet realm that night. She stood against the door, once she had entered, and looked at Penelope with deeply-lighted eyes.

"I am happy, Mistress," she said in a lilting voice. "Oh, I am happy! I have paid my debt to the man who gave me to you. God remembered me and let me work it out. And you—do you not rejoice also?"

"Yes," said Penelope, "yes—I do rejoice —for—he will never forget and—I, too, will have a memory."

Then Patience, whispering, did recount all that happened in the passage. The two young

heads were bent together. They sat with hands entwined like friends, and they had forgot that they were mistress and maid—of such great potency is love.

"But I did regret the betrayal of the soldier," said Patience at the end, "for his eyes beguiled me, and my mouth is still sweet with the honey of his kiss. He could have killed me, I avow, from the fury of his glance, and yet, when I sat me down beside him where he lay trussed like a chicken for the spit, and told him all, his blue glance softened, and he said, 'Egad! Mistress, I had not known that there were such gallant women living! And I come through this with my head I'll have you for mine or wish your Buckskins had done for me in truth!' He is to tell the story we made for him; and small danger he will deviate a hair's breadth, for His Excellency, your father, would make short work of a soldier that could be bought by a woman's kiss. Come, my mistress, let me robe you for bed, for you are all but falling with fatigue."

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THE LIGHTER OF FLAMES

CHAPER XII

THE LIGHTER OF FLAMES

ON the Jamestown pike the feet of the big roan horse made steady music. The dark and the rain were thick on every side. The forests that Patrick Henry loved seemed to reach out hurrying hands to push them forward. The man in the saddle visioned the coaches far ahead—how far ahead!—lurching through the mire as they neared the fateful Richmond, and St. John's church that stood there. On the morrow would be gathered within its sacred walls those firebrands of freedom, and their opponents, the Whigs and Tories, who represented the best thought and character of their respective parties. There would the crux of the stirring be reached. There and then would the new land heave up to fight for herself and her children, or remain forever chained.

Patrick Henry, the patriot, raised a hand and let it fall—and the roan horse galloped on.

Night and rain and the steady beat of the faithful feet!

From time to time the man laid a loving hand on the flowing mane. His lips were set and hard.

Roanie was trim and lean as his master, fit in every fibre. He moved like an engine—steadily, smoothly, easily.

The hours passed.

Once and again the man leaned down and spoke to him softly, with such vibrant feeling in the silver voice as none but one woman had ever heard, and the faithful animal responded with a longer stride, a more gallant burst of speed.

Hour by hour the night went by.

Grey dawn showed them passing like ghosts in the rain.

Day—and the two, so steadily toiling, were gaunt with their effort.

Sometimes Patrick Henry leaped from the saddle, and with his hand upon the horn, ran by the big roan's side for weary miles.

When he could not longer run he remounted to regain his breath, the good horse galloping on. But there was red in Roanie's flaring nostrils, his bloodshot eyes were strained. His gallant crest was low, and the lean ribs heaved above the heart that would not falter. His master's face was drawn and white, and when he looked at his friend the blue eyes grew dim with tears.

"It may mean death, my lad," he gasped between his laboring breaths as he ran, "but without your help I cannot win—and what is life to you or me in this great moment?"

The early day was seething with the travail in the town. The streets were filled with talking people. There were hot words, and the bailiffs were busy right and left; for war was whining in the rainy winds, and father was against son, brother turned from brother. In the church upon the green, throngs waited,

changed, shifted, packed themselves among the pews, and came and went again. Speakers were already in their seats and others coming every minute.

In the high pew near the outer door there sat one whose white face was rapt, like a martyr's on the rack, but whose poor heart lay like a dead thing in her breast—Doxey Fairweather, King's man and loyalist, but traitor to herself. And for some vague and pitiful reason she carried, held tight beneath her cape, an ancient violin. In the tragedy of the desperate time it was her only link with the man she had betrayed, the last poor semblance of the great love he had offered her. What strange comfort it may have given her, what bitter tears had bathed its fragile form, only her own soul knew.

Back and forth in the little church the orators swayed the masses.

Stick to the King—and suffer! Or declare for themselves—and fight!

Mr. Merwin, but newly arrived with His

Excellency the Governor of Virginia, flung himself before the crowd and flayed them alive as traitors to King George. The fire of his vehemence swept across them like a flail, and here and there the effect was noticeable. Mr. Jefferson himself, pale and steady, spoke from a heart surcharged and steadfast.

Gentlemen from all the Colonies were there, and all were grave and tense. Mr. Randolph, his white head and venerable mien giving him weight and dignity, spoke like a second Daniel. And again the effect shone out. There were soldiers in the King's uniform all about the green. The good man pictured war and its inevitable result.

The Colonies prevail against the armies of the King? Impossible!

And what would be the fate of those who uttered treason now, when the rebellion should have been put down? Could any tell him that? He begged them to think of their women and children.

Mr. Washington, standing by a window

with folded arms, sighed, though his eyes were deep with visions. Perchance he felt a presage of Valley Forge! Who can say?

He sighed again, and drew a hand across his forehead, for the fate of his country hung quivering in the balance upon these gentlemen's decision—and how they would decide he could not know.

Suddenly the hand that rested on his sleeve gripped down upon his arm. His eyes narrowed like a hawk's. For what was this that came in from the forest to cross the narrow green—what wild scarecrows of man and horse, that ran together in erratic arcs?

They made the green's edge, staggered out a little way upon it, and then, as if there were no more to do, as if the great call grew dim in his drooping ears, the big horse, covered with mud and rain and sweat, spread wide his buckling legs, lurched forward and down, and lay in sudden peace. The man sprang clear, stooped to lay his lips to the broad forehead,

and came on toward the church, swaying as he ran.

At the door they let him by, for he was not to be gainsaid.

In the midst of Mr. Randolph's mounting fervor there was a sudden awful silence, a stir and shuffle and a craning of necks. For there staggered up the aisle a tragic figure of mud and weariness, of white fire and undying faith. Its fringed garments hung sodden along the lean muscles, its mouth was open, its deep eyes were points of living flame.

Mr. Randolph fell back from the open floor, and Patrick Henry stood swaying in his place.

The packed masses that filled the church leaned forward in their seats, their breathing stilled, their senses gripped with the sudden import of destiny; while in that pew by the outer door a girl in a hooded cape rose straight up on her feet and swayed toward him helplessly. Her dark eyes stared in awful unbelief. Her pale mouth was open, and,

for what reason she did not know, tears of holy joy were on her cheeks.

The newcomer raised a hand to his forehead, but the old fur cap was gone, lost unnoticed by the way. He bowed to the chair and to the massed convention and, with sublime effrontery, took the floor. With his laboring breath spacing his words he began to speak.

"Mr. President," he said, gasping. "No man thinks—more highly—of the patriotism —abilities—of the worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the house. But different men see the same subject in different lights; and therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do, opinions—character—opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve."

He paused a moment, his breast heaving with the deep breath which he so sorely needed. When he went on, the tones of his voice had begun to take on that vibrant quality which

rang on the hearts of his hearers like a taut wire thrummed.

"This is no time for ceremony. The question before the house is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time through fear of giving offense, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country—"

Here the German, von Kneibling, biting his nails in anger, near where sat Governor Dunmore red with chagrin and helpless wrath, sprang to his feet and flung out a doubled fist.

"Traitor!" he cried in a booming guttural. "Traitor *now!*"

But a sibilant hiss from all sides silenced him and the speaker continued as if there had been no interruption.

"—and of an act of disloyalty toward the Majesty of Heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

"Mr. President, it is natural to man to in-

dulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth and listen to the song of the siren till she transforms us into beasts. For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst and to provide for it."

There was a deathly stillness in the crowded church. Men leaned forward with clenched hands, and beads of sweat breaking on their foreheads. The speaker's face was lifted, glowing like a lamp. His eloquent hands were held out toward his audience, palms upward, quietly beseeching.

"I," said Patrick Henry, "have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging the future but by the past. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed by a kiss. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of reconciliation?"

A mutter of anger came from the King's men, but the patriot swept on like an army

with banners. He set before them truths that could not be gainsaid. He showed them a future of slavery, and set beside it liberty. He played on their hearts like a wind on a golden harp, and their faces blanched with the tenseness of their feelings.

"There is no longer room for any hope," he said. "If we wish to be free, we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!"

Someone sighed among the packed throngs, and the whistling sound cut in like the whine of blades.

Patrick Henry, his face white now as moulded wax, drew his gaunt form up like a lance in rest, and tossing back his unbound hair, thundered home his tragic challenge to the world.

"Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us! There

is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking can be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! Gentlemen may cry peace, peace!—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms!

"What is it that gentlemen wish? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?

"Forbid it, Almighty God!

"I know not what course others may take; but as for me—"

The flaming face was raised aloft, as if the speaker had forgot his earthly audience and were speaking to that great tribunal of the dim beyond. The clutching hands, trembling visibly, reached desperately upward, as if to grasp the robes of Deity.

"—as for me," cried the resounding voice, breaking with the weight of passion—

"Give me liberty or give me death!"

He ceased abruptly, the appealing hands dropped, and he stood shaking in every limb, spent with the effort of his life.

An awful silence wrapped the convention. Not a rustle of a garment, not a drawn breath, broke the stillness. Then a man rose and came pushing to the fore. Another followed.

In one moment, the mass broke and poured in upon the floor. Hands were laid on the table. White faces were thrust forward. Burning eyes took up the flare of fire which Patrick Henry had borne among them from his wilderness.

The wavering was done, the structure finished, the surging masses welded.

A Cause was born, an army established, a country was heaving up to face a glorious future.

The patriots surged close to pledge themselves and their constituents to the casting of the die. Colony by colony their representatives came and crowded in the aisles.

And the Governor of Virginia, for once,

departed from an assemblage and was not missed. None knew of his going save his own party, passing out with black looks that promised grim reprisal.

They left the church and Richmond, knowing that their reign was tottering before those earnest gentlemen who were seeing, at last, the light.

Presently, there came out to the broad steps of the church a tall figure in bedraggled buckskins who stood for a moment and looked with unseeing eyes at the bare trees that fringed the green, so that he was not conscious of the girl who came slowly to his side—a girl in a hooded cape, whose fair face was wet with a rain of tears, and whose tragic dark eyes yearned upon him.

In hands that shook beyond control, she held out to him a violin.

"Sir," said Doxey Fairweather, tremulously, "once you did play me 'The Rose and Thorn,' and, failing of its sweet intent, gave me this against the time when I would listen. Though

you have spurned me since, though you have lost my King his cause, though I did betray you—still I am prisoner to the tender melody, for love is greater than all else, and I cannot help but love you. I pray you to forgive me."

Then indeed did the man shake himself from his high dreams of patriotism and look consciously upon her; upon the sweet mouth, quivering in its gallant pleading; upon the white cheeks, wet with tears.

For a moment he looked. Then he came to her and, opening his arms, took her in upon his breast, in sublime indifference to the eyes beholding.

"Sweetheart," he whispered, with his lips against her hair where her hood had fallen back, "love knows no forgiveness, since love can do no wrong. I know only that you are my woman by-ordinary, and that I love you to the foundations of my being—and shall to world's end."

And in the midst of his great glory he

raised his head and looked tenderly and sadly to where, a little way across the green, there lay a gaunt roan horse, dead for its country's sake.

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